



BLAIR ATHOL

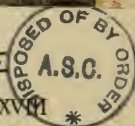


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BLAIR ATHOL.

VOL. III.

BLAIR ATHOL

A Nobel

BY "BLINKHOLIE,"

AUTHOR OF

"THE TALE OF A HORSE," "HIDDEN TALENT," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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BLAIR ATHOL.

CHAPTER I.

“Passion pale they met,
And greeted: hands in hands, and eye to eye,
Low on the border of her couch they sat,
Stammering and staring.”—‘*Guinevere.*’

So it happened that a letter appeared from Prince Lambertini in the ‘Morning Post’ of the 13th of August, saying, that in justice to his late *fiancée*, he wished it to be known that his recent mercantile misfortunes had been the sole cause why the engagement had been broken off.

Then on the 14th—the very next day—the

lady was married to Mr. Frank Leroy, with considerable demonstration and display.

People who endeavoured to solve the problem were simply obliged to give it up. The matter seemed fairly inexplicable. Henry was not at the wedding. He thought he had better keep away ; and besides, there was the grouse-shooting ; but he wrote to congratulate Leroy, and, until the day was over, lapsed into a state of stolid surprise at what had happened.

A great change had come over Kate, however. From being utterly careless, light-hearted, and comparatively without much feeling, she had grown grave and thoughtful. Leroy's cold-blooded, business-like proposal, which, perhaps, in weakness she had felt bound to accept, grew more repulsive the more she thought about it ; and the liking she had always had for Henry was now forced out into strong relief by the increasing dislike she enter-

tained for her future husband. Little by little, as the few days before her wedding passed away, she stirred up these ideas to a fever-heat, and knew, or thought she knew, that she was not only fond of Henry—for of that she had been perfectly conscious all along—but that she loved him, and, no matter what befel her, she would never love another.

This then had come upon her : this state, at which in other days she would have scoffed ; this school-girl condition, to which no ordinary events would ever have reduced her, had resulted from emotions at length roused, and from feelings which, though artificially torpid, had been stirred by a thorough fit of unhappiness.

She would have married the Prince without a regret, for there was nothing objectionable about him, and so the circumstance would not have ruffled the gay tenor of her existence ; but now it was different. Leroy's conduct

about the letters had been simply brutal, his whole manner of dealing with her had been so overbearing, he was so clearly a heartless wretch, that, although she knew she would have the whip-hand of him, she could not but feel terribly miserable at the idea of marrying him; and by the very contrast she was drawn more and more to Henry, who, all unconscious, was disporting himself in his northern home.

There was something insufferable about the congratulations of friends, and the way they spoke of the approaching wedding. Even her mother, father, all of them drove her nearly mad; for of course they did not know the truth, and treated the thing in a light that made her almost distracted. More than once she half resolved to be firm and break it off, but simply had not the moral courage to do so. What would Leroy do? what would people say? And then her father; it would be such

a terrible disappointment to him, for she could see now how the worry of importunate creditors had been telling on him.

So the day came, and in a fit of desperation she sat down early in the morning and wrote to Henry, telling him how she loved him, more, far more, than she could ever have dreamed of; that she was writing to him so that he might receive her last signature of "Kate Hamilton"; and then, unable to endure the thought that he should look on her marriage in the same way that every one else did, she actually launched forth into the real state of affairs, and declared how it was only to save her father from ruin that she had consented, and Leroy knew that was her sole reason. Henry must never mention it to a soul; but Leroy had but one object in marrying her, that was to secure the money he had made. She had got a hold over him by knowing this, and by being able to control the money that would

force him to be kind to her ; but Henry alone had her love, then and for ever, &c.

Then Kate went to church ; the ceremony was performed, and what a mockery it seemed to her !—To declare that she would “love, honour, and obey” Leroy !—Could anything be more false ? And then a chill of dread crept over her as she thought she must bring punishment upon herself by insulting the house of God with such frightful untruths.

However, it was done, and the “happy couple,” as the papers always say, departed to spend a quiet honeymoon at Shrove Hall, near York, which, being the property of an uncle of hers, who was shooting in Scotland, had been placed at their disposal.

As for Henry, the letter just mentioned caused all his old feelings, such as they were, to revive, and to gain power and strength, being now fostered by the knowledge, always so dear to the heart of man, that he was preferred to

all others. He did not take Tom or any one else into his confidence this time ; for he feared to have cold water thrown on what seemed to him an incident of true romance. Certainly there was something very odd about this marriage ; but there was her letter, that was enough for him. So he went on giving his imagination play, and piling up the ideal, until he too had fabricated for himself a state which he deemed to be of love, or something like it ; yet even thus not without a selfish satisfaction that for all that he could not now be made to marry.

But Kate had not said where they were going. She had, in fact, abstained purposely from doing so ; and he was obliged to let the days go by, thinking abstractedly of her, without the power to go or write to her.

But the infinitesimal atoms of destiny are shaping themselves so as to bring these two together. Already they are separated by no



more than twenty miles, though they know it not. And they are to meet anon, whether by chance or by invisible, inexplicable attraction we know not.

Shooting went on, but Henry did very badly at it. Mr. Blackburn even succeeded in fairly "wiping his eye" at an old cock grouse, though he was mounted on his carriage-horse, and had only ridden up to look on. He had brought his gun with him, thinking he might have a casual shot, but never intended to fire from the back of the horse, as that animal, though sedate enough, had never been used for such a purpose. However, the sight of Henry missing with both barrels, and the bird going cackling away, was too much for the old gentleman; so he let fly then and there, killing in grand style.

The horse, as it happened, stood like a rock; but for all that, it was an example of the life there was in the old dog yet, as Tom irrever-

ently remarked in commenting on the circumstance. Indeed, there are few people, young or old, who would like to drop the reins and fire from the back of a horse which they knew had never experienced such an event before.

But as regards Henry's condition Tom was puzzled, for he had appeared to have thoroughly recovered himself up to the destruction of the gates, and now to be suffering from a relapse ; even a journey to Malton, where Jamieson had a useful string, nearly wound up, for York, did not seem to do very much good, except that he brightened up for a while, and became interested at the sight of Glentilt, a big, slashing three-year-old, bought as a yearling at Doncaster principally because he was a Blair Athol.

This colt had been a very useful breadwinner for the stable during the season. He had, in fact, won no less than twelve races at the various meetings, though, as they were all

over short courses, the outside world put him down as a non-stayer. Jamieson himself was by no means sure on that head, for, as the colt had shown such a fine turn of speed, and there were so many more short-distance races to win than long ones, he had absolutely never tried him to gallop further than six furlongs.

“Why, sir, you see,” said he, “he’s not a Derby horse, or anything of that kind, so I just considered how best to make him profitable. Now, you know, a horse doesn’t want to do nearly so much hard work for these short courses as for the long ones. We just keep him in good healthy condition, and then ‘jump him off’ a few times before he happens to be wanted, and he’s all right; but bless you, if I wanted him for the Ebor, for instance, I should have had to be clattering him along for weeks back, and whether he could *stay* or not, you may be sure his legs wouldn’t *last* so well at that game.”

“Why, it seems,” said Henry, “that many horses then get the reputation of being non-stayers without much reason.”

“Undoubtedly, sir. Where’s the good of wearing them out by galloping when they can pick up more money, and last twice as long, by going for the short cuts? Unless your horse be first class, when of course you trains him for the Two Thousand, Derby, or Leger, as the case may be, and wins a big lump all at once, why you’d much better not think about whether he can stay or not, until you find that he can’t go fast. It will be time enough then to try the long distances.”

“Well,” replied Henry, “I dare say you’re right from an economical point of view; but, somehow, I don’t feel much pleasure in winning the sort of races Glentilt has done, though of course he has been very useful in the way of paying expenses. I want to go out of the regular routine at this York Meeting; for, upon

my word, half the reason I have not oftener been to see the horses run is that they go for such uninteresting races now. I shall put Glentilt in the Lascelles Stakes the first day. It's one mile, and then we shall see how he does ; if he wins, he shall go for the Queen's Plate."

"Very good, sir," said Jamieson, looking with an appealing air at Tom, who, however, was pleased to see Henry brighten up at last over something, and was determined not to discourage him.

So they departed home, leaving the trainer slightly indignant at the intentions thus propounded ; but, after all, he thought, it mattered not to him so long as he did not back the horse.

The first day of York August Meeting soon arrived, and with it there came the usual influx of persons from all quarters. To those who preferred, like Tom and Henry, to walk

on to Knavesmire, the scene was not a little remarkable as they wended their way among the crowds, all on sport intent, excepting the light-fingered gentry, who are equally at home on such occasions with the three-card-trick, the thimbles, or, it may be, the pockets of the unwary.

Should you wish for a short route, instead of going on to the carriage entrance, you will find a narrow lane branching off the main road, which cuts off a considerable angle. It has walls on each side for some distance, and then emerges into a couple of fields, through which the path takes you straight on to the course. But before rashly going by this way, be forewarned that it is the resort of the maimed, the halt, and the blind, who are always stationed against the wall on either side of you in great numbers. Where they come from, and how, we know not, neither how they go away. Suffice it they are inevitably

there when you pass by, and they present all the numerous eccentricities of withered legs with immense feet turned the wrong way, diseased faces, contorted bodies, and palsied arms, that ever you may have imagined in your wildest dreams.

Having survived this ordeal, you infallibly encounter sallow men with red noses and sad-coloured garments, who ask you, "Who will be at the races?" and, quickly presuming that you "give it up," answer the question themselves by saying, "The devil will be there;" and you proceed on your way, perchance reflecting that the "great father of lies" will in all probability not find the society less congenial to his tastes on account of the said sallow-faced gentlemen forming part of it.

Anon you observe the holiday yokels, shop-boys, and others, essaying vainly to shoot glass balls from traps, to the no small danger

of her Majesty's liege subjects, but with little detriment to the balls.

Not far from here too, in those days Mr. Tattersall would be holding his sale of blood stock ; and there you would stop, if you were a reasonable being, and take note of the youngsters as they come under the hammer, or were led about outside.

“ Will any one say five hundred for him ?—four hundred ?—three ?—two ?—one ?—fifty ? Will no one give fifty for him ? Take him away then.”

Alas ! words like these were too often heard at York ; and so it happened these sales have passed away, or next thing to it, with the result that the Doncaster programme is hopelessly crowded, and two rings have to be in operation simultaneously.

It is extraordinary, under the circumstances, that the Doncaster sales average so well as they do, since they labour under this terrible

disadvantage. Fancy the feelings of the proprietors of the Cobham and Marden Deer Park studs, were it ordained that their yearlings should be sold simultaneously !

However, to pass that by, in due time Henry and Tom found themselves approaching near to the enclosure, and there, the first thing they saw, was Jamieson with Glentilt and a couple of others.

“ There’s a strongish lot, sir, for the Lascelles Stakes,” said he, touching his hat.

“ Yes,” answered Henry ; “ all the better sport. Who is to ride him ? ”

“ I’ve got Jonas, sir ; he’s a clever lad enough. My own boy got a bit of a kick the other day, and I didn’t like to put him up.”

“ All right, Jamieson. He doesn’t run for an hour yet, I see, and I shall be here again.”

Henry and Tom thereupon walked out upon the course to see what was going on ; and, meanwhile, a gentleman connected with Tim-

brell's stable, from which Nero, the probable favourite for the Lascelles Stakes, hailed, had just agreed with little Jonas, the destined rider of Glentilt, to put him £100 to nothing on their horse. He had previously dosed the boy with the sweetest of Moet and Chandon, and that, coupled with the donation of £10 in advance, quite did the business.

Jonas was at the time very hard up. In himself he was a well-meaning lad, but the temptation of £100 was too strong for him, coupled with the knowledge that there was a ready explanation for Glentilt's defeat in his supposed inability to stay.

Mr. Timbrell and those associated with him knew that their horse was certain to beat anything else in the race ; but they feared Glentilt, as they were aware that he was of much better class than Nero, and, if he could stay the course, would undoubtedly cause them to lose the money which they intended to put down

freely on this event. There was the doubt about Glentilt's staying, it was true ; but it would never do to risk that ; and hence arose the transaction with Jonas.

Henry and Tom were spatiating up the course, when suddenly one from behind clapped both of them on the shoulders at the same moment. Starting round, they beheld the newly-married Leroy, who appeared very glad to see them. No time did he give for enquiry, but cried cheerily, " Now come on, you fellows, and have some lunch. We have a drag here with two or three people from York, and the ' Missis ' will be delighted to see you, I am sure."

Henry started in a way that no effort could conceal.

" She here !" thought he. " Scarcely married a fortnight, and goes to races in a drag with people from York, and is called the ' Missis ' ! It's really scandalous ! "

What more he might have thought goodness knows, but he found himself, with Tom and Leroy, by the side of the drag; and there, yes, there was Kate—the only lady of the party. There were several officers from York, and others whom Henry knew, and she was alone among these!

A slight flush came over her face as she saw him, but she quickly recovered herself, and welcomed him in the most matter-of-fact though cordial manner.

“I felt sure we should see you here,” she said; “and is this Mr. Blackburn, whom I have not seen since I was fourteen?”

Tom replied that he was indeed that person, though he should certainly not have recognized her.

“Because I made so little impression upon you, I suppose?”

“No, that can never be. The reason is, that I deemed you incapable of improvement

then ; whereas now I find you improved beyond all recognition."

"That's a set speech you have, I suppose, for occasions like this ; but really, Mr. Blackburn, after your experience of Miss Whytehead, you ought to have learned to speak discreetly. Ha ! ha ! you see I know all about you !"

Tom, utterly outflanked by this unexpected sally, owned his defeat by falling to on the lunch ; while Henry, who had been standing by, half-irritated at the conversation, climbed up to Kate's side, and as he sat down looked with sad earnestness in her eyes. The light badinage of the gallant captains and others who were clustered around, some on the drag, some talking from below, the popping of corks, the whole semblance of gaiety, sank into nothing now as their glances met, and he took her hand to shake in the orthodox style, but forgot for a few moments to do anything but hold it.

He could read all truly in that look of pain, followed as it was by the soft yearning gaze that almost seemed to say, "Oh that we two were far away from here together!" Stedfastly still did he strive to look into her inmost heart, and felt assured, without a word spoken, as the honest blue eyes met his, that she had written very truth—that he alone had her love.

Another moment, and he had pulled himself together to make some common-place remark, for Leroy was looking on, and the spell was broken. Kate once more launched forth into airy nothings with the whole *posse comitatus* of men, and seemed to be about as fast a young lady "as they make them"—at least so thought Tom and divers of the officers.

Henry felt grieved at this; but he divined, and divined rightly, that she was in reality trying desperately to become oblivious to her position, and would do anything to keep up excitement, which, if it subsided, would

leave her so sad and melancholy almost to madness.

“For all that,” thought he, “such a spirit is very dangerous. It might lead to all manner of ill—” and by the sophistry that is ever ready in such matters, he was beginning to convince himself that it was his duty to comfort Kate, and render her life more happy.

But the time for the first race was drawing near, and one by one the party went across to the ring to make their various bets.

“Are you going to do anything on this race, Jolliffe?”

“No, thank you, no more; at least, I beg your pardon; no, I shan’t do anything this time.”

“Well, then,” continued Leroy, with a peculiar expression, “you perhaps won’t mind looking after the ‘Missis’ till I come back.”

“All right, I shall have much pleasure.”

The two were thus left comparatively alone.

She seemed very stiff and constrained at first. People always are when they meet one to whom they have written more freely in a letter than ever they have spoken. But Henry, who, for all the romance of the business, had not neglected the champagne, gradually thawed the conversation into a state of interesting half whispers; and she, when she once began, gave free play to her feelings, so that ere long they sat there "the world forgetting, by the world forgot," except, indeed, that the good husband was watching them through his field-glasses somewhat curiously.

"Oh, Henry, don't, don't think I have come here like this of my own wish. It's all hateful to me when I think of it; but Frank suggested it, and anything, no matter how wild it is, so long as it prevents me from thinking, gives a little ease."

"Don't talk that way, dear; it's like people who take chloral, or things of that

kind, to make them sleep. They gradually want more and more till it kills them."

"And if I died, would it not be better so? What have I to live for?"

"Live because I ask you, if for nothing else, and promise me not to go in for excitement to avoid thought. You have much need to think in your position; besides, if you say you can't bear to think, I shall feel that you can't bear to think of me."

"Oh, but, Henry, dear, do you think me wrong in having written to you like that? do you despise me now for talking to you like this? I've no one on earth to talk to about it but you, and if you say it is wrong—"

"Oh, no, my darling, it's not wrong at all. It is not like an ordinary case. So far as the dry law goes you are his; and he knew all the time how the matter stood with you, so there has been no deceit; but in spirit you are

mine, and in heart. His in that sense you will never be."

"Yes, yes, that is so. Oh! you surely never dreamed I could ever love him?"

"No, darling, I did not; but tell me, is he kind to you?"

"Oh, yes, he is very considerate; and he says you and I may write to one another."

"Indeed! I'm very glad to hear that."

And so did this converse proceed, innocently enough, they thought at first, but moving over hidden fires. So totally were they engrossed each in the other—except once, when an old gipsy fortune-teller aroused their attention by her warnings against a fair gentleman—that they hardly observed the finish for the first race, in which one of Henry's horses took part, and ran a good second. He did not even see that it was in the race until he mechanically glanced at his card when the winning numbers

went up, and found that he had come near scoring a win without knowing it.

However, it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good, for had he gone off to attend to the matter, he would inevitably have backed his horse, and lost money, as Tom and the rest, who now came back, had done.

But in no long time they are saddling for the Lascelles Stakes; and again does Henry hang back to stay on the drag—this time, however, not quite so far forgetting himself as not to call out to Tom to take the odds to £10 for him about Glentilt.

“I must back him, you know,” he continued, “as he is a Blair Athol, though I suppose he can't possibly win.”

Very strange did all this seem to lookers-on, many of whom knew Henry, Tom, Leroy, Kate, and indeed all the party; and of course the way Henry comported himself excited much remark. We can only say it *was* strange;

but our business is to state the facts, and such as they were we have stated them.

But Henry was not so far gone yet as to forget a Blair Athol, and that one his own : so that, instead of resuming the conversation as before, he discoursed on the subject of Glentilt—a topic not wholly welcome to his fair companion, but still the horse was his, and so she felt some sort of interest in it.

“ There he comes ! ” cries Henry, as he sees Jamieson leading the white-faced chestnut on to the course.

“ Oh, I hope he'll win ! ” exclaims Katè.

“ Doesn't he go well ? ” says Henry, waxing excited as Jonas shoves him along round the course towards the starting-post. “ I don't see why he should bustle him so ; however, I suppose he wants wakening up, he's a sleepy beast.”

Now Master Jonas had done this in reality to, if possible, take some little out of the horse

with a view to his not winning ; but the effort is to take more out of himself, for the Moët and Chandon has by no means been without effect on his half-starved little body, and this rapid motion through the air causes the fumes to rise to his head in an alarming fashion. He is indeed drunk ; and in this point the gentleman connected with Timbrell's stable has made a serious error.

Of the other horses, bar Nero, no notice need be taken. They were the usual sort of north-country handicap animals, and Nero was now being backed against the field. You could get almost anything you liked against Glentilt, for he was regarded as a "stiff one," owing to certain hints that had leaked out.

"There, they're off. By Jove, Glentilt has got a good start."

Thus says Henry to Kate, as he stands watching the horses rattling along towards the top turn of the course.

“They’re moving now to some tune, and Glentilt’s leading yet; I suppose he’ll never stay home.”

One of the most peculiar effects in watching a race is to note how the speed of the horses always seem to increase as they gradually round a bend and present a broad side view. So of course it was in the present instance, as the field of twelve sped swiftly round the top end of Knavesmire, and were even now coming into the straight. Glentilt still leads, Jonas, despite the drink, having sense to so far perform what he has promised by letting the horse run himself to a standstill if possible.

“They are coming up to him now,” cry the many, unwitting of the optical delusion that always makes the field apparently draw up to the leaders when they are fairly in the straight.

Henry knows better.

“He has a lead of three lengths, you fools!” he shouts, “and I do believe they’ll never catch him; he’s going very strong yet.”

And then, as the white-face still shows the way at the distance, and Nero struggling on is evidently in difficulties, he cries in a very tumult of feelings,—

Look, Kate; look, dear; there’s the old Blair Athol to the front as usual! Glentilt wins! Glentilt—go on, you fool! go on!”

But Jonas has all his work set to hang on himself, and yet the one idea in his obfuscated brain is, that he must stop the horse. With this object he has been using the utmost of his exhausted strength for the last quarter of a mile, and is even now hauling like grim death at the reins; but Glentilt, who likes to gallop away from his field, doesn’t see the force of these operations.

“Idiot! ass!” yells Henry. “He’s going to throw the race away.”

And "Nero" is the cry, as the favourite, ridden out to the very utmost, gradually draws up. Locked together they pass the post, Jonas, pale with fear and sickness, pulling with what might and main he still possesses.

"Oh, Henry, have you won?" asks Kate.

"Don't know," snaps he, scarce noticing her. "Yes, I have; hooray!" for Glentilt's number has gone up; and without so much as a glance at Kate he springs down, and with a cry of "Blair Athol for ever!" rushes to meet the horse, and assist Jamieson in escorting him back to weigh in.

Jonas is half crying over the victory that the horse has forced upon him; and there is dire consternation among the knowing ones who went for Nero.

Great is the cheering from the ring, not because of Henry or his horse specially, but because it has been a rare race for the book-makers, few of the public having backed the

winner. To Henry it is a period of pure joy, the old, true, honest feeling for a while coming back into his heart. He has forgotten Kate and all the attendant follies ; and looks with good Yorkshire love upon his horse—a love that is refined in a manner incomprehensible to the gross multitude by his long-cherished hero-worship of Blair Athol. He has not had this feeling stirred for some long time now, and it comes on with redoubled force at last. Strange though it may seem, it renders a return to Kate for a while positively distasteful to him, and he goes rather with Tom and Leroy to see the last of the horse as he is taken away. Then as to Jonas, he must be interviewed ; so, having gathered up Jamieson, they search for the youth, and find him in a corner of the jockey's stand, very much not himself.

“What on earth did you pull at the horse like that for ?” asks Henry.

“’Fraid he’d shtop if I loosed his head,” replies the youth, cunning even in drink.

“ Well, at all events you shall ride no more horses of mine, now that I’ve seen what an exhibition you make of yourself.”

And the party depart, thinking that drink only was to blame ; while poor Jonas, who has put the other side in the hole by winning, finds himself utterly fallen to the ground between two stools, except for one comfort, that £10 paid in advance.

Tom now informs Henry he has got £150 to £10 for him about Glentilt, which is a very pretty bet under the circumstances, and causes more hilarity of feeling, till, what with meeting friends, and one thing and another, the time has passed rapidly by, and he is still in the inclosure.

One matter of especial interest occurs in the shape of a combat between a very small honest man (presumably) and a very large

welsher. This takes place outside the ring, and our friends go forth to see the sport. The little man has backed Glentilt, and comes for his money. The large man declines to pay, saying the bet was made about Nero. Whereupon the other waxes furious, but several unprepossessing-looking gentry step in and affirm that they heard the bet made, and that Nero was the horse.

“I tell you what it is,” now says the large man, “I’ve a deuced good mind to give you the hiding you deserve, you swindling little scoundrel, trying to do me in this way! He deserves ducking in the pond, gentlemen.”

And the men of evil countenance assent loudly, while the unreasoning public begins to draw menacingly round the small man. At that moment an ancient gentleman, sitting on a two-shilling stand hard by, proclaims in a stentorian voice that the bet was booked “Glentilt,” he heard it; that the big man is

a welsher ; he knows him, etc., etc. And the little one, having a large heart, seizes the opportunity as the fickle multitude are wavering, and fiercely assails the ponderous foe. The evil-looking ones slink away, or have already slunk, and there is no aid at hand. The large man, whether from bad conscience or from hustlings of the people, makes but a poor show ; he has already been dabbed smartly in the eye and mouth, while yet another blow gets home on his nose, another somewhere about the belt, and there is wild excitement as the contest rages.

Suddenly upon a ginger-beer stall there springs a gentleman's servant in chocolate livery, striving, what he can, to see the fight. His emotions master him, and boil over ; he must do something, so seizing on the stone bottles, he hurls them in rapid succession, one by one, into the air, hither and thither, and more than one crown is cracked by the descent

thereof. The ginger-beer vendor has been gazing abstractedly at the combatants, but looks round on his store at last. Oh ! who can picture his expression when he sees what is going on ? He flies on the man of chocolate livery without more ado, and the two grovel together under the stall ; confusion reigns supreme, and the welsher escapes.

Being much edified by this scene, Henry became more and more jovial, and spent a very happy afternoon ; nor did he go back to Kate till the last race was about to be run, and the horses were being harnessed ready for a start immediately afterwards.

He found her quiet and sad-looking, very different from what she seemed at first ; and his heart smote him as he thought, “ She is trying to keep quiet for my sake.”

It was easy to explain to her that absence had been necessitated by looking after his horses ; and then, as he was relapsing into his

previous love-lorn state, the race was over, and with hopes of meeting on the morrow the two were parted, as Leroy drove off at once.

Loitering across the course, Tom and Henry came within some thirty yards of the two-shilling stand before mentioned, and there still sat the old gentleman who had denounced the welsher. Almost all the other occupants of the stand had moved off. He was alone on the extreme end of it, and a considerable height from the ground. While they were casually glancing that way they saw a man walk up the stand and engage the aged one in conversation. This was one of the evil-looking persons we have before referred to. Before they had time to get nearer, they caught sight of the very welsher himself, who had come on to the stand from the other end, and was slipping quickly and quietly along to the old man.

Not thinking of any ill for the moment they still watched, and then the welsher, having drawn within reach while the other distracted his victim's attention, lifted his ponderous first and struck the unsuspecting foe a terrible blow on the cheek, cutting an awful gash, and knocking him right off the stand down on the ground below.

Tom, Henry, and others rushed forward to help the poor old man, whom they found roaring out that he was killed, which re-assured them as to his safety; turning indignantly then to find the cowardly ruffians who had done the deed, they could not see a single vestige of them.

Reader, do not think this a scene of fantastical imagery; there is not one single portion of it that is exaggerated. The old gentleman may still be seen at York race-meetings, and may be recognized from the scar on his face; but he has found out that welshers are

dangerous men to deal with, and is cautious.

We will pass over the rest of the August Meeting. Kate and Henry were there every day, and his feelings were dubiously balanced between her and his horses ; tending, however, very much to the horse, when Glentilt, having waited on his only opponent, the celebrated Frenchman—winner of the Goodwood Stakes, Cup, etc., and countless other races—came out at the finish, and won the Queen's Plate in a canter, to the utter surprise of all wise men ; though, after all, we have more than once seen similar results when there were only two in a race : for instance, the defeat of Dutch Skater by Amor at Doncaster.

But the races were over at last ; and Henry had accepted an invitation from Leroy to come and stay with them the next week at Shrove Hall.

“I dare say it is strange to ask you to

come so early," added that gentleman; "but what matter? I don't care what the world thinks."

"And I'm sure I don't," replied Henry, not quite grasping what his "spiritual wife's" husband meant.

CHAPTER II.

“I have touched the highest point of all my greatness :
And, from the full meridian of my glory,
I haste now to my setting.”—‘*Henry VIII.*’

HENRY in due course proceeded to Shrove Hall, where he was heartily welcomed by Leroy, and, we need hardly add, by Kate. He had gone there much against the advice of Tom, his sister Mary, and indeed any one who cared to offer an opinion on the subject ; but the fit was on him, and many elements besides that of mere liking for the lady drew him on.

The whole thing was so novel, so strange, and Leroy’s conduct in asking him to visit them thus early was so totally remarkable, that mere curiosity to see the end of it, and

love of adventure, acted powerfully on his mind in forming the decision that he would go, in spite of what any one said.

As to Leroy, it is hardly given us to understand what were the first motives of his action in this matter ; but it seems that he perhaps had an idea that the only way to make life supportable for his wife was to provide anything and everything that would please her ; and he knew well, partly from what he heard in town, and partly from his observations at the races, that Henry was, from her point of view, a very desirable companion : so then let her have Henry, by all means. It mattered not at all to him so long as she lived on, and remained amicable towards himself. It would never do for her to die of grief, or anything of that kind, for then the money would come back to him, and would be as unsafe as before. Besides, who knew but what some complication of circumstances might arise in which it would

be useful to have her and Henry in his power?

Such may probably have been the train of thought at first running through his mind; but, as he never divulged his ideas to a human being, we can but surmise. Anyhow, he at first showed no symptoms of jealousy, but looked on with cynical amusement while Henry sat and gazed at Kate on the first evening of his arrival; and she sang songs of the "Looking Back" type with the tenderest pathos and the most suggestive melancholy.

What a strange trio they were! The fine old drawing-room of Shrove Hall has seen many distinguished and many strange characters in its time; it has heard not a little of whispered intrigue; but never since the time it was built—long years ago—did it contain three people more curiously circumstanced in their respective relations.

"I'm very glad you've come, Jolliffe," said

Leroy in course of conversation, "because you will be able to go out riding with the 'Missis.' I never was a horseman, as you know; and she's been looking most wistfully at the nags in the stables every day since we were here."

"Oh, yes!" interposed Kate, "that will be so nice! My uncle has some capital horses, and it has seemed quite a sin to see them doing nothing. We'll go out to-morrow, and, Frank, you can drive in the pony-trap."

"An excellent arrangement, I should say," cried Henry, laughing; for he thought it best to assume a light, jocular demeanour on what concerned his heart most deeply.

So when the morrow came, as come it did—though there had not been much sleep in the house that night—instructions as to the equestrian requirements were sent out; and with the sun shining bright and clear the two set out for their ride, Leroy promising to follow

them in no long time—a promise which events prevented him from performing.

The horses were both fine free goers, with the easiest of action, and sufficiently temperate to give their riders full leisure to attend to one another.

The first thing Henry said was,—“Why, we forgot to tell him where we were going.”

“How stupid of us !”

“I’ll go back in a minute, and let him know.”

“No, don’t bother now ; besides, he will be as well where he is.”

After this, of course our delicately-situated youth did not press the subject further, but continued,—

“Well, where shall we go to ?”

“I don’t care, I’m sure.”

“Let’s go to Fountain’s Abbey ; you’ve never seen it, have you ? We can put up the horses and walk through the grounds.”

So they turned thitherwards ; at first somewhat embarrassed with the position, for however well a man may get on when he has partaken of a race-luncheon, he does not find that same natural facility of discourse in the plain light of the sober, serious morning. But the sun was genial and warm ; the harvest operations in the adjacent fields gave a picturesque aspect to the country ; the birds were singing—for upon such an occasion it would have been most unorthodox on their parts to have refrained—and there was something about the general aspect and order of things to draw a man's nature more easily to the surface than could possibly have been the case had the air been cold and damp.

Henry plucked a spray of leaves from the branch of an overhanging elm as they were going silently along, and looked abstractedly at it.

“ Tell me,” said she, “ what are you thinking about ? ”

“I was thinking I would give you half of this”—breaking it in two—“and I’ll keep the other half. Maybe it will be like a fairy tale, and we shall find that so long as the leaves stay green love will remain; if yours or mine turn brown, then love on that side is gone.”

Kate took the leaves, and said nothing; then he added:

“Perhaps some day, if the leaves keep green, we shall be able to join them together again.”

“Oh, Henry, you must not talk like that. It is impossible to think of such a thing without wishing for it; and it is impossible it could be without—”

“Without what, dear?”

“Without his death!” and Kate looked up with tears in her eyes.

“Well, neither you nor I will ever wish for that: still, I can’t help wishing for you; but it seems only the shadow of a fond regret

made darker by the thought that hope is vain."

"Upon my word," thought he, a moment after, "if I'd seen that sentence written in a novel I should have said no fellow could possibly have brought it out on the spur of the moment; but for all that there it is."

"Henry, we must not give up hope; we must be very good, and then, who knows what may happen? Oh, if I had felt like I do now when we were so much together in London they should never have kept me from you when you lost your money!"

"And had I felt as I do now I should never have said I lost it, because I didn't."

"Oh, what do you mean?"

And then followed explanation and lamentation, self-condemnation on both sides, and mutual conclusion that the hypocrisy of that date was being atoned for by the unhappiness of the present.

Now, let not the reader imagine these proceedings excessively vile, or introduced to impart a spurious interest in the characters. Henry was utterly thoughtless in the matter; had no design of any kind; simply took things as they came, and accepted the position. His love-making—if we may call it so—with Kate was exactly what it would have been had she been unmarried; and this fact must be kept steadily in view, lest the reader denounce both us and him.

Kate too, who had been quite spoiled from her youth upwards, thought of little except that she loved him. She meant no harm at all; but, so far as the world went, she was desperate; indeed, to her mind anything was better than to be considered by it the dutiful wife of Frank Leroy.

It was an attachment, however, that arose as much from extraneous circumstances as anything, for we have seen the two had by no

means the same feelings when nothing stood between them: the very easiness of getting married then rendered it common-place. Now that there was, as it seemed, an inseparable barrier the desire to surpass the same rose proportionately. Such is human nature!

However, not to be tedious on this head, let us on to Studley, where the couple, having delivered over their horses to the charge of a man who sought their favour in that line, passed into the beautiful grounds and gazed with wonder and increasing sentiment on the giant trees and beautiful expanses of ornamental water. There were not many visitors that day, and so the walk was all the more enjoyable. Presently they reached a seat by the side of the water, and sat down to survey the scene around. Who could have planted those enormous trees, and when? How strange it is that man, the lord of creation, passes away, while the product of a small

shoot he has placed in the ground exists for future generations ! Our works live after us, —at least if we have done a work worthy to live ; but those trees might have been planted by a child in olden times ; —behold them now ! —but where is the child ?

As they still sat and talked they espied three ducks swimming towards them from the opposite side of the water ; and to their no small surprise, these birds kept on till they came to the bank, up which they waddled, and then stood looking at the two with wise yet wistful eyes.

“How strange !” said Kate. “What can they mean ?”

“Ah ! you see they’re accustomed to the manners of the regular English pleasure-seeker, who never comes to a place like this without food. Many sandwiches, hard-boiled eggs, and other peculiarly English delicacies, have been no doubt discussed where we

are sitting, and the ducks expect their share."

"How horrid to be taken for people who would come here and eat hard-boiled eggs!"

"Yes; it isn't a very romantic idea, is it? But at the same time, those ducks will think us very mean and inferior beings."

"Poor things, I wish I had something for them; I should hate to be thought stingy, even by a duck."

"Well, Kate, I'm afraid they will inevitably think us so; they are going away in disgust."

It was even so; the ducks, having walked anxiously round the back of the seat, where they were accustomed to light on treasure-trove in the shape of remnants of paper-bags with crumbs in them, came to the front again, gazed with great wonderment at these unproductive mortals, and then stepped slowly and it seemed sadly down the bank to swim back

whence they had come, pondering on this circumstance, which was unparalleled by any in their experience.

And now to walk on, where we can get the first view of Fountains Abbey, lying snug, as is always the case, between the flanking hills. Not so imposing at this first view is Fountains as some abbeys we have seen; for the size of the place does not appear as yet. Once come up to it, however, and you will be astonished and delighted—at least, if you be not a dullard in such matters. It is not for us, however, to describe it; we simply say it is grand; and for the rest, have not the details been written in the guide-books?

There too is the old yew tree, some one thousand two hundred years old, the aforesaid books inform us, and therefore not without a claim to interest and to thought. It is a fit subject for a poem, but in mercy to our readers we abstain; indeed, we believe that

they will find a poem ready-made about it in the books.

Seriously though, what manner of men were these old monks who dwelt here in the days of old? Was life for them all prayer and penance? or was it all beer and skittles? Who can tell; so why speculate? Only we may observe in passing, that the kitchen fire and chimney seem to have been passing large; and a most notable apartment is the refectory.

Enough: let us return with Kate and Henry, nor trouble our heads to listen to what it is they are saying all the while.

The ride home passed, as is usual on such occasions, like a bright dream far too quickly over. Yet they were a good hour late for all that, and Leroy had been waiting for luncheon.

“Well, I hope you’ve enjoyed yourselves.”

“Oh, so much!” answered Kate. “We’ve

been to Fountains Abbey, and it's just too beautiful."

"Indeed ! I couldn't have come after you, even if I had known where you were going, for I have had to arrange about going south forthwith."

"Goodness ! when do you go ?"

"Oh, I'm not going to leave you here ; but don't look disappointed, we'll all go together."

There was a disagreeable emphasis on the "all," and Kate coloured rather angrily, while Henry looked out of the window, pretending not to have heard.

"What do you mean ?" she asked. "Why have we to go ?"

"I got a telegram, shortly after you left, to say Munroe, the member for Chesterton, is dead, and I have to lose no time in getting there to attend to electioneering matters. You'll come and help me, Jolliffe, I know ; I

hear you're great at that sort of thing. No excuses—it's settled; I've ordered rooms for us at one of the hotels, and we start to-morrow."

Henry was quite ready for anything in his then frame of mind, and, indeed, an election was a sport he particularly affected; so he readily assented. And after another evening of song and smouldering undercurrent of sentiment, the next day came, and the three took train for Chesterton, leaving the domestics of Shrove Hall terribly exercised in their minds as to the rights and wrongs of this remarkable honeymoon.

Chesterton was in a state of great excitement. Mr. Munroe, the late member, had been a Liberal, but Mr. Gladstone's government had been growing unpopular, and parties for the borough were now very equally divided. Already Sir Harcourt Jackson had appeared on the scene as the candidate who was to

oppose Leroy, and canvassing, not to speak of drinking, had commenced in good earnest.

Leroy and Kate, with Henry in attendance, and the valet and maid somewhere behind, were escorted through the town in triumph to their hotel upon their arrival ; and they found Lord Chesterton there already, with various members of the committee, whom Leroy thanked warmly for the attention.

Meanwhile the crowd of free and independent electors loudly clamoured in front of the hotel, and it was understood that they required a few words from the Conservative candidate at once. Great was the cheering when he stepped out on the balcony of the front windows, and having shed himself of what he called his heart-felt thanks for the manner in which they had said to him ; denounced the Government declaration of policy of leaving no man alone in the quiet enjoyment of his existence, harassing all interests, meddling, muddling, etc. ; threw in

final allusions to Church and State, religious education and the Bible, which called forth deafening applause, and so retired, having created an excellent impression. Then there was more uproar, and at last he led Kate to the window, whereat the many-headed became doubly vociferous, and the supporters of Sir Harcourt Jackson gnawed their fingers, or scratched their heads with despondent apprehension, as they looked on from their shops or other habitations around the market-place.

Lady Geraldine Quantock, among other members of the Earl's family, was now introduced to Kate, and surveyed her with some curiosity when she found that she had met her several times before, but had no idea that Leroy had married the Miss Hamilton whom she knew.

“A strange thing, indeed,” thought she, “and so soon, too, after proposing to me. I suppose he's done it out of pique.”

Henry and Lady Geraldine speedily became good friends, and she did not see at first how things were between him and Kate. She was a most active politician in election times, and had done great good by canvassing, much to the scandal of the opposite party ; and here was Henry, said to be an accomplished writer of lampoons, squibs, skits, or whatever you call the somewhat inferior compositions that figure forth laborious jests when an election is impending.

Obviously he was a heaven-sent messenger to the unenlightened Radicals of Chesterton, and she straightway tackled him on the subject, causing him to take down notes of the peculiarities of all Sir Harcourt Jackson's supporters, and anything else he could think of, with a view to writing something that should make them writhe with the anguish his satire should cause, and should hold them up to the ridicule of all just men.

Kate witnessed these confabulations, not altogether pleased ; but the party separated very shortly, as it was now dinner-time, and she was left with her two gentlemen.

Comfortable rooms had been assigned to them, and the cook used his or her best skill, so that dinner was a success ; but afterwards Leroy wrote letters, and Henry wrote squibs from the notes he had taken, so that poor Kate began to feel rather dull, and made a move to go to bed, thinking that would bring Henry to her at once. But no ; when in the agonies of composition he always became peculiarly oblivious to all surroundings, and indeed disagreeable if interrupted. He merely moved his pencil about impatiently for her to say " good-night," fearing to lose the idea that was then in his head ; and so she had no resource except to go, feeling very sore at heart, not to say angry. Henry didn't even get up to let her out, and was writing away faster than ever before the

door closed. Could it be that, as he left her for his horses the other day, he only cared for her when he had nothing better to think of? She looked at the leaves he had given her, and they were still green.

“Perhaps I expect too much,” thought she, and with that solatium fell asleep.

But there was a good deal of truth in her suspicions for all that. Her youthful admirer was such an easy-going individual that he seldom found anything himself for his hand to do; but when he did find it, or it was, as in this case, put in his way, he did it with all his might. With him the various episodes regarding Kate were but the outcome of pure idleness and leisure; now that he had work before him Kate, for the time being, was cast to the winds, and morning, noon, and night he was busy, doing all he could in the good cause.

Kate really cared little about the business, only she didn't like to go out much, for she

was so painfully conscious of being pointed out as Leroy's wife—a distinction which her soul abhorred.

So Henry and Lady Geraldine came a great deal together; and it is not too much to say she was fairly delighted with him, for when ladies take to anything—even politics—they too are very energetic and thorough; and he certainly seemed in her eyes to work more zealously, and with greater tact, than all the rest of the committee put together, her father included.

But after all an election is now-a-days a very tame affair, since the introduction of the despicable ballot, and the cessation of the glorious old nomination-days and the hustings. Oh, for the times of our youth, when we have seen the sagacious multitude roar, and shriek, and yell at the candidates, who, divided by but narrow bounds, were free to denounce one another successively from the same building,

wherein also were packed the dense files of their principal supporters!

We once were located among others on the hustings, and felt, as it were, a puppet in a Punch and Judy show. Still, the scene below was interesting and exciting enough, and we got a good place near the front, close by our candidate. Then was a time when it was accounted wise by the multitude to stick bread loaves on the end of staves with a price marked thereon. What the peculiar political significance was we forget. This, however, we remember, that several of such loaves having been pulled down, and become thoroughly sopped in the puddle—for it was raining hard—a miscreant of the other party took upon himself to hurl one of these sponge-like masses at our candidate aforesaid, whom narrowly missing, it flew full in our face, and burst in fragments thereon, with hideous befoulment. We draw a veil over this scene, except to say

that our candidate was elected, and that we in future frequented the ground in front of the hustings as the safer place.

There, at such places as Whitby, we have seen the intelligent voter armed with the pliant cod-fish ; armed, we say advisedly, for whether held firmly through the gills, so as to slash the enemy with the tail, or whether grasped by the tail, and brandished club-like aloft, to descend with head and shoulders on the doomed foe, the cod, or any other large fish, is truly formidable. There too the smaller fry, such as herrings, whittings, &c.,—if decayed, possibly better,—are found useful as missiles ; and—but, alas ! we are speaking in the present tense : such things *are* no longer, and we can but look back to them as a brilliant ray in the light of other days, which a so-called Liberal government has obfuscated, in its anxiety, as it would seem, to reduce what was once straightforward and transparent, to secrecy, darkness, and the

ballot-box—a favour only to cowardice or the spirit of duplicity.

But on that subject we might wax warm, and it would never do to appear in the light of rampant partisans ourselves. Indeed, he would need to be very true to the cause who, knowing Leroy, could become enthusiastic over his election.

Still the work went on. Speech on speech was made ; meeting after meeting was held ; placards, pictures, squibs, and all manner of oddities did abound ; and now the polling-day was come.

From an early hour Henry, who had chartered a large break, had been driving in voters from outlying districts ; and was now making raids through the public-houses to secure all such as the cunning antagonists might be rendering incompetent with drink.

Great excitement prevailed, at least the

papers said so, and the Radical herd were not disinclined to come to blows once or twice. In the herd element the Conservatives were decidedly weaker, and, knowing this, some far-seeing gentleman had procured fifty small bludgeons, with which he armed a body of the most trustworthy—the bludgeons to be carried up the sleeve, and only used in case of absolute necessity. Leroy addressed more than one speech to his supporters from his hotel, and Sir Harcourt did the like from his. Flags, effigies, and all manner of devices were carried hither and thither. The day was getting on ; lists of the supposed state of the poll were exhibited by both parties, each giving themselves a considerable majority ; and now, as the afternoon was waning, every carriage full of voters became an object of intense interest as it drove up. Henry was standing at the Hotel door to look on—the first rest he had taken in the day—when a letter was handed to him. It had

been sent down-stairs by Lord Chesterton. It ran thus:—

“DEAR MR. JOLLIFFE,

“I am told ten of our farm-labourers have been made drunk and shut up in a barn at Jones’s. You know the place; you were there the other day. Do, like a good fellow, drive as hard as you can and fetch them.

“Yours truly,

“CHESTERTON.”

Henry, on reading this, gazed wildly around for a vehicle, as he had lost sight of the one he had been using. Most opportunely there appeared in sight a waggonette, driven as it seemed by a butcher. Instantly to him the mission was communicated. Henry jumped on the box beside him, and away they rattled as fast as the old thorough-bred horse could take them, for there was but three quarters of an hour before the closing of the poll.

“Take care that flag doesn’t tumble out, sir,” said the man ; and Henry saw for the first time that they had with them a large blue banner, on a long and very heavy staff, which was lying in the body of the vehicle. He accordingly tended it during the rest of the journey till they reached the barn. This was locked ; they heard snoring within, but could make no one answer.

“Oh, there’s no time to wait ; let’s burst the doors with the flag-staff.”

“All right, sir ;” and the two rammed at the obstacle with right good will, so that the wood, being somewhat rotten, burst open at the first assault.

There, sure enough, were the ten drunken ones ; some, however, now recovering, and startled by the noise into a kind of sobriety.

“Come on, quick,” cried Henry ; “you’ve got to vote.”

The men scratched their heads, and slowly

the position dawned on them. Those that were able helped to convey the others to the trap, and lay them down in the body of it, while they essayed to sit up. One of them acted as standard-bearer, and in less than five minutes the party were off.

What a sensation they caused as they went through the town! for it was within ten minutes of the closing hour, and it seemed certain that the contest was very close. The more sober of the men cheered loudly themselves, and he with the flag brandished it aloft, while the butcher shoved the horse along so fast that the Radical mob were fain to make way for him. They reached the polling-booth, and all were got in, and, with one exception, succeeded in giving their votes. That one remained speechless and senseless up to the last, so that nothing could be made of him.

The blood of the butcher was now up, and he was all for another triumphant drive

through the crowd. Henry hardly liked the idea, for they had looked mischief the last time ; but he was not one to refuse.

“Jump up,” he cried to the standard-bearer, who was still more than half-drunk. “Now then, on you go ;” and away into the market-place again they drove, Henry and the butcher on the box, the drunken standard-bearer alone in the body of the vehicle.

This ostentatious triumph was too much for the equanimity of the foe : from all sides they rushed at them. Two men seized the horse’s head, but the adroit butcher slashed them both heartily across the face with his whip, so that they loose their hold, and the horse springs forward into a gallop. The drunken man whirls the flag-staff around, felling several of the nearest to the earth, and they are away ; but a whole sea of faces comes rushing after them as they turn back to look, for that flag-staff has injured some no little, and they mean business now.

Vollies of stones and mud hurtle through the air, but fall innocuously on the backs of the pursued, who at length gain the front of the Conservative hotel, where Henry alights and is among his friends.

Just then there is a tremendous rush on the waggonette, and the drunken man is dragged forth; the butcher seizes the flag from the staff just as it is disappearing, and whipping up his horse rattles off, and thus secures the honour of his party; but there are cries of "drown him," with reference to the captured one, and he is even now being conveyed rapidly to the river.

Then for the first time Henry thought the fifty club-bearers must be utilized. They were all ready at hand, and he charged with them to the rescue. There was a short but sharp strife. The rescue was effected, and the drunken man was brought back in triumph to the hotel, his clothes being now nearly torn to pieces.

Henry himself, after all this, found that he had suffered no harm, except a few kicks on the shins, and a thorough plastering on the back with mud, the result of the fusillading which had been directed at the waggonette. The drunken man, who acted as a red rag on the opposition, having been wisely removed from sight, comparative good temper was soon restored ; and there was nothing to do but shout, drink, and wait for the declaration of the poll.

This came at eleven p.m., and it was—Leroy, 1718 ; Jackson, 1714. Leroy had won by four votes, thanks to the timely importation of the drunken men.

How proud and elated did he feel when he addressed the electors now ! He, Frank Leroy, but a few years before a needy solicitor, now raised up as his ambition had desired ; and it but remained to force himself to the front in the council of the nation, of which he was now

a member. On entering the hotel at last, the "Boots" handed him a letter that had arrived during the day, but not been heeded. He opened it, and read as follows :—

18, *Budge-Row, E.C.*

"DEAR SIR,

"We are instructed by Mr. Nicol Haynes of Kimbolton to apply to you for repayment of £2000, paid by him for two hundred shares in the Patent Horse-Clipping Co., Limited. We may mention for your information, that the ground of the demand is the non-disclosure of your contract with the patentee in the prospectus you caused to be issued, and on the faith of which our client took the shares. If the above sum be not paid within one week legal proceedings will be taken without further notice.

"Yours truly,

"MACMAHON & Co."

"*F. Leroy, Esq.*

"*Chesterton.*"

CHAPTER III.

“Nescit equo rudis
Hærerere ingenuus puer,
Venarique timet.”—*Horace*, ‘*Carm.*,’ III. 24. 55.

THERE is no occasion to dwell on the remaining doings of that year, for we are warned to get forward by our rapidly decreasing space. We must not, however, leave the question in suspense as to what Leroy did in the matter of this claim, which came upon him in the light of such an effectual damper just at the moment of his triumph. In itself it was capable of being dealt with readily enough; but he knew it was but the beginning of evils, for other shareholders in the various companies he had floated were gradually awaking, one by one, to a sense of their position. One comfort

he had—at least he thought so—that he was at any rate only liable under the Act to the attacks of individuals, and there was no chance of the whole liability coming on him at once ; besides, it was but the original shareholders, with shares subscribed for on the faith of the prospectuses, who could claim against him now. Against all holders of shares by transfer from others he was safe, as he had nothing to do with them.

With but £40,000 or £50,000 he believed, after all, he could so finance matters as to clear out all dissatisfied members, either by paying them off himself, or creating a market so that others might buy their shares. On the whole he had been precipitate in getting married and settling everything, for his reputation was now at stake, and all for want of £50,000, which he might easily have reserved from the settlement.

Now Leroy had to do with a certain amount

of trust-money. It was the property of an old aunt of his, and he was the only one of her three trustees who took any active concern in her affairs. Among other securities there were about £60,000 worth of foreign bonds,—chiefly Russian,—and he had them all in a safe in town.

Much pressure, much temptation, and fear of good position lost, have influenced better men than Leroy before now to do what is wrong. The reader will not therefore wonder, that as the claims of the ever-growing creditors became more and more imperative, the horror of exposure, bankruptcy, newspaper reports, and loss of his hardly-won seat in the House, were too much for him.

“The old lady will never be any the worse for it, as I shall pay her the interest as usual. She’ll never know the difference, and I can replace it by degrees.”

Thus said he, and sent instructions to a firm

of brokers to sell the stocks and pay the amount realized to his credit.

This was not regarded as anything remarkable, for he was known to be an exceedingly rich man ; and it was opined that the sale was made with a view to completion of the purchase of a fine estate and excellent house he was reported to be about buying near Chesterton.

This latter rumour was true enough, and the estate was bought ; but the money that paid for it was part of Kate's settlement. Leroy, in fact, appropriated the proceeds of his aunt's bonds for his own purposes, and by this means managed to keep his own affairs straight ; not but what even thus there was need of the very nicest manipulation and diplomacy.

Having once made this plunge into what was his first legal crime, he became in some respects a different man. No doubt he had

before this derived many ill-gotten gains from the public, but never, so far as he understood it, beyond the pale of the law. Now it was different; and the fear was ever before him that disclosure and disgrace might ensue. But then he expected the old lady would leave him all her money, as he was her sole living relation, and so no one would be the wiser. Still he was for the future nervous and irritable in temperament, nor did he seem, as heretofore, devoid of care.

Kate, when the election was over—for until that time she had felt a mere nonentity, so far as Henry was concerned—lost no time in reasserting all her sway. Letters growing gradually warmer and more warm passed between the strange lovers; nor did Leroy ever ask to know their contents. Some day, he thought, they might develop into something that would be of consequence; but until then let them be.

Following on these letters, he had been induced by his wife to actually visit Oxford during the winter; had stayed at the Randolph, and seen her go out day after day with Henry, who had horses there for them both to ride. Sometimes Leroy and Kate had entertained Henry in their rooms, sometimes they were with him in College, where the remarkable dinners and the peculiarity of the Scout's waiting were only relieved by the enlivening strains of "Slap.'s" Band, specially chartered for the occasion. There would be other music too afterwards, for Henry always had a piano; and, half imperceptibly to himself, Leroy became from this ten days' visit a trifle jealous.

It was a dog-in-the-manger. feeling, no doubt, for he did not care about Kate himself; still there was something not altogether pleasing about seeing her entirely taken up with another.

But these matters for the present we must pass by, having merely glanced sketchily at them, so that the ingenious reader may fill in the intervals for him or herself. We have at least shown the state of affairs up to date, and may become more explicit by-and-by.

But when the term was over, and all the sport was done, it fell out that hunting in Yorkshire was, during the Christmas vacation, very attractive; and without detailing at length the facts connected therewith, it will suffice to say that a certain Mr. Suffield had afforded considerable amusement. He was a wealthy Liverpool cotton-spinner, and had in the meridian of life, or rather later, taken it into his head to become a country gentleman. This, by the way, was a very wise resolution on his part; and we are sure that their name is Legion who, having made a respectable fortune, might have followed his

example, and cleared out with it ; but that the craze was on them, and they stuck to their work, eventually, perchance, to lose all in the bad times that were yet to be.

Mr. Suffield managed to meet with an honest horse - dealer, and, giving unlimited prices, was superbly mounted, so much so that he incurred the envy of many, especially of Jack Blackburn, who was but indifferently furnished in that way, and was very fain to assist him in riding his horses. Now, be it known that Mr. Suffield had never been outside a horse before he located himself in this county ; and as he was now considerably over forty years old, it may be conjectured he was not very capable of witching the world with his equestrian skill.

One evening, after Jack had actually been out on foot, he remarked to Henry, with whom he was now great friends, “ I can’t bear to see that old Suffield riding those horses ; they’re

far too good for him. It really ought to be put a stop to."

"You'd better write and tell him so."

"Don't be a fool ; but he does vex me when I see him. I've a good mind though to write him an anonymous letter about it."

"That would be a very inferior business ; better write and tell him you will ride his horses and make them handy for him."

"What a joke that would be ! Wouldn't it astonish him getting such a letter !"

"Ah, well, but it wouldn't do to enrage him ; we might send letters from some stranger, offering to undertake the business, and saying his horses were notoriously mis-managed."

"Why," interposed Mary Jolliffe, who was sitting near them, "you might send a lot of people letters like that when you were about it."

"That's true," said Jack.

"An excellent idea," added Henry. "Give me paper and pens. Now then, what name shall we write in? It must be something very uncommon."

No one offered a suggestion.

"Battersby would be good for one part," continued Henry. "What say you to Joseph Rawlinson Battersby?"

All agreed that the name was unique and excellent.

"Now, then, let me write;" and in a very short time the following was composed.

It was destined to become famous, so we give it *in extenso*.

Mr. Joseph Rawlinson Battersby

Begs to announce that he is making his annual tour through the hunting counties, for the purpose of collecting a stud of horses, to be located for the remainder of the present season at York.

In offering a copy of the rules to be observed by his

patrons, Mr. B. wishes to assure all that no insult is intended; he feels confident that they will see he is actuated by a sincere desire to promote their welfare.

They will doubtless be aware, that the value of any horse is doubled after it has been ridden by J. R. B.

Mr. B. makes it his object to observe in a day's hunting such persons as are possessed of good but mismanaged horses. He feels it the triumph of his skill to reclaim and sell at large prices animals that, from want of efficient horsemanship, have become well-nigh ruined.

That Mr. B. can do this, if any man can, is certain; and those who doubt it are referred to Mr. Arthur Yates, the cleverness of whose horses is so frequently spoken of in the sporting papers (all his steeple-chasers are made by Mr. B.).

Mr. Ernest Willoughby, it is not generally known, entrusted Langar for five weeks to Mr. B. Further refere-nces can be given if required.

In anticipation of considerable patronage, Mr. B. has engaged a number of commodious boxes at York, and will have the horses under personal supervision. For the next week his address will be Yarm; afterwards Scawin's Hotel, York.

RULES

*To be observed by gentlemen entrusting their
horses to Mr. Battersby.*

1. That all horses must stand at the expense of their owners.
2. All horses must be in York before February 1st.
3. Each horse to be accompanied by a groom.
4. Each owner must name the lowest price at which he will sell his horse. If Mr. B. can procure a larger sum, he will retain the surplus.
5. Five per cent. on the price mentioned will be deducted as commission, in case of a sale, and will be charged if the horse is not sold.
6. All expenses are to be paid before the horses are returned.
7. Mr. Battersby will be responsible for no damage.
8. Mr. Battersby's hotel and other expenses will be fairly divided among his subscribers.
9. Mr. B. can permit no interference; the horses must be entirely given up to him; and no owner will be, under any circumstances, allowed to even mount his horse until Mr. B. declares the education complete.

We do not mean that the above was the very first draft ; but it was quickly settled in that form, amid much laughter.

Tom, who came in just then, deigned to be much pleased with it, and gave a fresh idea.

“ Why not have it printed as a circular—for I’m sure it reads like one—and send it to all the York and Ainsty and Bedale men ? ”

“ Capital ! ” cried Henry. “ I’ll get it done to-morrow by old David Peat at Barnstaple ; and in that case we must stick some fictitious printer’s name at the bottom. Let me see. Oh ! ‘ T. K. Whitely, Printer, Darlington.’ That will do.”

And so, from but a minute beginning, the scheme of a large joke arose.

This joke was completely carried out ; the circulars being despatched to the York and Ainsty men the day before there was a meet at Whortleberry-Park, not far from Newton.

Thither Henry repaired, unpretentiously

arrayed in shooting-clothes, and mounted on an old hog-maned horse, that often did harness duty. A very comfortable mount, however, was this old beast, unless it was necessary to squeeze a little speed out of him through deep ground. At the same time, no one could for an instant think that he carried Joseph Rawlinson Battersby, or that Joseph Rawlinson Battersby would have taken the field in such attire.

There was a large meet, and among those present was Mr. Willoughby himself, who was so audaciously referred to in the circular. He had a week or two previously won a point-to-point steeple-chase on his horse Langar, and it was for that reason Battersby pointed to that special animal as the one he had educated, for the name was at the time very familiar to all the hunting-men.

There too was Mr. Suffield, somewhat gloomy of aspect, and evidently perturbed.

He soon singled out Henry, whom he knew very well, and riding up to him, said in a low voice—

“I have received a most peculiar circular this morning—a man who says he takes note of people out hunting who can’t ride; really insulting, I call it.”

“Why, is it this thing?” and Henry pulled out one of the documents from his pocket.

“Have *you* had one sent to you?” asked Mr. Suffield, an expression of relief coming over his countenance.

“Yes; and I believe every one else has. Lord Fauconberg, and all the lot of them.”

“Oh! that alters the case altogether. I dare say he has sent circulars to some who can ride better than, or at least as well as, himself?”

“I should think very likely indeed. I wonder, though, if he’ll do any business.”

“I shall certainly write to the man. That

grey mare of mine is a little too much for me ; I might let him have her."

Henry now moved off, leaving Mr. Suffield much relieved in his mind that he was not singled out by Battersby as a conspicuously incompetent horseman, to whom the circular might fitly go. This had been his first impression, and he had been much bothered thereby ; but now, when he found all were in the same boat, he felt quite inclined to avail himself of the man's services.

As the real author of this moved about, exchanging greetings here and there with his friends, there was but one word that struck on his ears from every group that he passed by—that was "Battersby." Discussion on that topic was universal, and abounded chiefly in the neighbourhood of the unfortunate Willoughby, who came in for a constant fire of questions on the subject.

There was something absolutely delicious in

all this, at least so Henry thought, and he entered with zest into the various conversations. Very difficult, however, was it to avoid bursting into fits of laughter now and again, as the exquisite irony of the position kept presenting itself vividly before him.

It was a blank day ; but for once it was all the better so, for it afforded more opportunity to hear and thoroughly realize the words and opinions of all.

It was simply superb. Here, for instance, was a gallant captain of the 9th Lancers, thinking to lightly negotiate a small fence, but his horse bucked over it with unexpected vigour, and the gallant one showed very much daylight.

“Halloo, there, Fitzurse,” cries a friend. “Joseph Rawlinson Battersby will soon be having his eye on you !”

“Yes, indeed,” thinks Henry, “he’s a great deal nearer than you imagine.”

“ I say, Willoughby,” asks Lord Fauconberg, riding up to that gentleman for the first time that morning, “ *who is this Rawlinson Battersby?* You know him, I see. Upon my word I half thought the thing was a hoax when I got it ; but, after all, it seems genuine enough. The fellow must take us all for fools. *Who is he ?* ”

Mr. Willoughby for the twentieth time indignantly repudiates the alleged mentor of Langar ; but the impression appears to prevail that Battersby has let out a secret which the owner of the horse did not wish to be known. He had hitherto had all the credit connected with the horse and his performances to himself ; small wonder, then, that he did not like these facts being disclosed.

“ Take care, my horse kicks,” cries some one.

“ Send him to Battersby,” is the ready reply.

“ I really think I will : he can’t make him worse, and he may make him better.”

“ I’ll give him this mare,” says another gallant captain, “ if he can make her jump water.”

And so the amusement goes on throughout the day, no one seeming to doubt for a moment that Battersby is an actual being, destined soon to be among them. Such a story loses greatly in the telling, and must necessarily depend much on the imagination of the reader. Let any one, however, endeavour to put himself in the position of the author of this famous document on that day, and he will be able to realize, according to his capacities, what a “ merry conceit ” the whole affair was ; not that the sport was by any means over yet, as will shortly appear.

For the Bedale men still remained ; and to them the circular was despatched the day before a meet at Skipton Bridge, whither

Henry betook himself, this time accompanied by his sister Mary. Tom was of course of the party, and they had made shift to give Jack a mount, so that he might see the fun. In their expectation of hearing much talk about Battersby they were, however, disappointed, and therein the difference between the gentlemen of the Bedale and those of the York and Ainsty was very notable. Very cautious indeed were they of the Bedale in those days, whatever they may be now; indeed, when it came to a really good thing, the worthy master, John Booth, could show them all a clean pair of heels, despite the fact of his riding some eighteen stone. But then his heart was in the right place: he knew every inch of the country; and his horses, besides being grand animals, were preternaturally clever, for which, of course, the credit was due to him who "made" them. We have seen one of his horses follow him like a dog over a

foot-bridge, and jump a stile off it on arriving at the far side. We have seen him climb by means of a tree-branch over a brook that was overflowing its banks, and then from the other side call to his horse, which at once plunged in and struggled through to him as best it could. We have seen,—but enough of that; we could go on for a week dilating on the cleverness of John Booth's horses, whereas the matter just now does not deeply concern us, saving that it affords a means of drawing a contrast between him and the members of his hunt, of course with a few honourable exceptions.

Now these gentlemen, having received their circulars, had taken them to heart in the same manner that Mr. Suffield had at first done. Each one was inwardly conscious of his own inferior horsemanship, and therefore thought that he, and he specially, had been singled out by the observant eye of Battersby. Under

these circumstances no man communicated to his fellow what had happened. Each brooded darkly over his own circular, and kept it concealed from mortal ken, deeply pondering where, when, and how Battersby had spotted him, or whether it was simply common fame that had reported him to that accomplished person as being one likely to stand in need of his services.

Moreover, there was not much time for discussion on the matter to arise, for Baldersby Whin was always a sure find, and this occasion proved no exception.

Many an hour have we stood waiting by that whin for the fox that would not go away, the nature of the ground, the denseness of the cover, or some other reason always appearing to enable the wily reynard to dodge about in it with heart-rending perverseness ; while the huntsman, and perchance the master, plunged about on foot cracking their whips, shouting,

and scarifying their lower extremities with the pricks, their horses waiting for them the while as calm and complacent as cows.

It is on occasions such as this that the field becomes more than usually sheep-like: ever ready to gallop off pell-mell after any one who chances to move hastily in any—no matter what—direction. There are who will then disport themselves in negotiating small fences with great determination; while in those days there was one to whom we assigned the title of the “Idiot man,” who was possessed of a certainly old steeple-chase mare named Polly, and on her he would perpetually and persistently gallop round or across the largest fields while nothing was going on, occasionally, though very rarely, essaying a jump, which always landed him somewhere among the ears of his steed; but he never came off: he would soon scramble back into the saddle, and still urge along his wild career until the hounds

went away, and then as a rule he was no more seen.

He was a thin, meagre-looking farmer; further description of him is unnecessary.

But now in this said whin behold the gallant pack dotting and flickering about, each one an instant seen and then an instant lost from view. Thatcher the huntsman has an unusually happy expression. He has a good mount, which is something for him, as the funds of the hunt do not run to a very expensive establishment, and the whips have to make shift with but sorry cattle. What a superb weight-carrier is that which the master is riding! not unknown in the show world, we believe.

Here are one or two sportsmen with flowers and such-like objectionable adornments. Depend on it, they are not up to much. This large, John Bull-like individual—one of the native gentleman farmers of the district—will

scarcely have an easy time of it on the big black four-year-old by Valentine, that at best will only do for harness.

There are sundry shapes and forms of riders from Thirsk—from the solicitor, who, with his hat jammed on the back of his head, is ready and willing to give you a lead over anything without charging any fee whatever, to the wine-merchant, who appears to think that it is as important for him to remain right side up, without being shaken by jumps, as it would be for the many bottles of excellent old port which he is well known to possess.

From Sion Hill we have a good man and true, with divers juveniles of his family, and from Baldersby Park a party that go not amiss.

There is Mr. Jack Falldown, who, it may be from a presentiment that his name portends mishap, is very careful to keep his horse on its legs and himself on its back. He is irreproach-

ably dressed, but we apprehend he will not be found to excel in other respects. At any rate, his sister—the neatest rider “wot ever was seen,” as Mr. Jorrocks would say—is more likely to distinguish the family name in the annals of the chase.

But “hark !” says Mr. Suffield, who is sitting almost on the neck of his big grey horse. “They’ve found, I think ; I *heard a dog bark.*”

No time for laughing at this : it is true enough, though oddly expressed. They *have* found ; and what is more, the fox has gone away on the far side of the whin, so that we must catch hold of our horses’ heads and hustle along round the bottom corner there, so as to get with them as soon as possible.

Henry has a good and fast mount this time in the shape of one of his thorough-breds that was not quite up to racing form. The horse can jump too, and is well-up to his light weight.

Mary has her own clever little mare, and Jack is on the old hog-maned horse.

Small opportunity, however, is there for noting anything of this kind. The hounds are racing away in glorious style ; we must on.

“ They’re going now, sir, aren’t they ? ” calls out Thatcher, as Henry comes up alongside of him.

“ They are so ; ” and both go on in silence.

The country is not very formidable, but there is the master a good field ahead, and he will take some catching. What’s this ? a small fence with a closed gate and much mud thereabout. Jack Falldown has inspected this fence, and has concluded that to open the gate is the part of a discreet man. The gate, however, is not amenable to his efforts, and remains obdurate. His horse becomes excited and impatient ; paws the ground, stamps, and splashes him. Just then Tom, who is rather behind-hand, comes clattering up.

“You must get off, sir, you must get off,” cries Falldown, who would not soil his own boots in the mud for worlds; “*you can’t possibly open the gate without getting off.*”

“*Ah nivver gets off,*” says Tom, making Pigg’s celebrated rejoinder as he takes the fence in his stride, and is soon far away, leaving the unfortunate one still struggling with the refractory gate. Whether he ever got through it or not does not clearly appear.

But there is no sign of the pace abating; it is simply astonishing; and already there is a very long tail to the field, not caused, as usual, by obstacles, but simply by want of sufficient speed. There seem to be but thirteen or fourteen who can keep within hail even now. Henry is there, of course, for with a thorough-bred he can scarcely be otherwise. Tom is beginning to draw up, but will probably fall away again, as he has taken a lot out of his horse already. Mr. Falldown’s sister is, as

usual, going well. Jack and the old hog-mane are pounding along hopelessly in the rear. The master still shows the way, and it is extraordinary to see what a turn of speed such a heavy horse as his possesses.

The line now is through the grassland along the side of the river Swale. Capital going this, though a trifle heavy, as it lies low, and has to be fenced off from the river by a high embankment.

Just look how the hounds are stretching away ! sterns down, and nearly mute. They too display somewhat of a tail now, more than is altogether seemly ; but never mind, they are doing rare work.

The master has come back to his field at last, it would appear ; but rather because he is in doubt which way to go. Suddenly Henry sees him diverge from the line, and gallop away as hard as he can in the direction of the Swale embankment.

What can he mean? He is not a man to do that for nothing. There must be some grave and sufficient reason. That is what flashes across Henry in a moment, and he decides to follow this peculiar lead. One of the whips follows him; the rest of the field go straight on after the hounds. The master gains the top of the Swale embankment, which is not over four feet wide there, but gets gradually broader towards the base, and now he is cantering gaily along upon this eminence, fully fifteen above the level of the subjacent ground. Henry and the whip pursue, scarce knowing what to think, when to their surprise, as they reach the top, they see looming in front double posts and rails, very stiff too, which the master is just about essaying. The big horse, as clever as a cat, nips in and out with the greatest safety; and Henry, coming next, is bound to go. He looks wistfully at the hedge which runs down into the field below, to see

if by any chance it may be more easily negotiable ; but no, it is an ancient and absolutely impervious bull-finch. These rails, with a fifteen feet roll down one side or the other if you fall, are the only possible place of egress ; and so he just trusts to providence,—for his horse is not an accomplished jumper of cramped places,—and canters quietly up to the objectionable obstacle. The result is all right ; not what one may call a “ fluent ” performance, as there is a stop short, a bounce up and down, a stop, and another bounce ; then the other side, and a descent of the embankment again after the master, who is bustling along more eagerly than ever. A glance back to see the whip safely over, and then away. There are the hounds ; we shall be with them again very soon.

But where are the field ? Nowhere visible ! nor were they ever visible so long as the trio kept within view of those rails on the

embankment. Subsequent investigation, however, disclosed the fact that, having been hopelessly pounded, as the astute Mr. Booth well knew they would be, they were constrained at last to resort to the very rails over which the advanced guard having passed, as we have seen, were now out of sight. The rails did not altogether please their noble minds; but the John Bull gentleman on the black four-year-old sacrificed himself for the common weal by charging them, clearing the first lot, and crashing through the second, and then rolling with his horse right down the embankment into the field below, fortunately without injury. The rest of the field then succeeded in getting over, and making the best they could of a stern chase.

All this while Henry was marvelling more and more how the weight-carrier could still keep up the speed, which was really alarming. He was driving his own horse along now,

and could just manage to hold his own with the leader, but could not gain an inch on him.

“Well,” thought he, “here am I on a thorough-bred, riding only ten stone, and there is he good eight stone heavier, and yet I cannot catch him. That horse must be a very devil, or this is an impostor ; and yet,” looking round at the whip, who was dropping astern, “I’m not so badly off as some people.”

On they went. What a lathering and soap-ing of reins is there now ! An awkward feeling there is too of having nothing to spare in the way of effort at the fences.

“By Jove ! if this goes on I shall have to finish the run on foot.” So he begins to think as his mount pecks badly on, landing over a small stake and bound. “What a man that is !”

Newton House is not far off now. Surely to goodness this cannot last much longer.

Ha! the master has viewed him, and is cramming forward with a final spurt.

“Yonder he is!”

Henry too sees him now, plodding along, dead beat, only a field in front of the hounds; he disappears through a hedge; now the hounds are after him. Have they run into him? No; they are found to be at fault, and are spreading to cast themselves in that very field into which we saw the fox go but a few moments ago. He must have lain down in ditch, and they have run over him. No, it is not so; and, strange though it may appear, nothing more was ever made out of that fox. That he had crept off somewhere, and was lying helpless with exhaustion, is almost certain; but where could not be discovered, though it must have been close at hand.

“At any rate,” says the master, wiping his brow, “we’ve had one of the best gallops I ever remember.” Then pulling out his watch

“Thirty-seven minutes, and from Baldersby Whin to Newton House is over seven miles. That’s fast enough, in all conscience.”

The field were now coming up, all with their various stories of what had happened ; but to those who had no second horses out—and our party was among this number—it was very advisable to make off home, for such a gruelling had not fallen to the lot of any of them for many a long day.

This is but a mere incident connected with the Bedale, and grew naturally out of the affair of Battersby, hence we have given it ; but as to Battersby, the sport on that head culminated when the worthy and sedate ‘Baily’s Magazine’ got hold of the matter, and thoroughly regarded the circular in the most serious and critical light.

About a page of ‘Our Van’ was devoted to the question, and the reader may see, if he chooses to investigate, how completely the excellent

‘Van Driver’ was taken in, as well as other people. We have not the magazine before us, but we know well the gist of what was said. There were some clever and sarcastic remarks about Mr. Joseph Rawlinson Battersby being a gentleman whose trumpeter was dead ; then a *resumé* of his circular, with most of his Rules printed in full, certain portions of them being in italics. “The italics are our own,” said the ‘Van Driver,’ who used them to draw attention to what he deemed the particularly heinous portions of the Rules. Then, said he, with biting irony, “Mr. Battersby is going into Yorkshire, a place where people are notoriously incompetent to manage horses ; so we wish him the success he deserves.”

Especially, however, was he moved by the reference to Mr. Arthur Yates and Mr. Ernest Willoughby.

“Unfortunate Mr. Battersby !” wrote he. “What induced you to put such an awful

crammer upon paper? We have been at some trouble to investigate the matter, and—would our readers believe it?—Mr. Arthur Yates and Mr. Ernest Willoughby *never even heard of Mr. Battersby!!*”

The solemnity with which these strictures of Baily were given was perhaps one of the best points of the whole performance, which was yet to have a final stage.

Various plans had been proposed and abandoned for getting some one to personate Battersby, or to send invitations to every one to meet him at Scawin's Hotel on a certain day, and then go among the number to see what was said and done. But difficulties arose in the way of such plans; and there was also the fact that, owing to a defect in the details of the arrangement, no provision had been made for receiving letters sent to him to Yarm. Several men wrote to him, and these would doubtless have had their letters returned.

On the whole, then, another circular to get him out of this difficulty was what seemed most requisite.

It ran thus :—

“ Mr. Joseph Rawlinson Battersby regrets to say, that, owing to domestic affliction, he has been prevented from coming to York as announced by him.

“ For the above reason he did not go to Yarm, and he fears that, in the cares and anxieties to which he has been subjected, he may have suffered some of his letters addressed there to be returned to the writers.

“ He has heard that Mr. Arthur Yates and Mr. Ernest Willoughby deny all knowledge of him. So be it: the infant, budding into adolescence, shakes off the hand that has guided its hitherto tottering steps; and it is thus that they, mounted on their now perfect horses, repudiate J. R. B.

“ Were he so disposed, proof would not be wanting; such proof he scorns to give.

“ A time will come when Yorkshire gentlemen will see him flitting, meteor-like, through the fastest run, and, gazing from afar, they will confess that his own intrinsic merit is a recommendation all-sufficient for *Joseph Rawlinson Battersby.*”

These circulars were posted by a friend of Tom's in Cheltenham, and created additional sensation. That they persisted as against Mr. Willoughby and Mr. Yates was the most remarkable part of them. Those gentlemen doubtless felt anything but amicably disposed towards the mendacious Battersby.

It was long before it became known that Battersby was not genuine business, and then, strangely enough, a certain officer of the 7th Lancers was charged with being the author of the circulars. He, knowing that much amusement had accrued from them, denied the soft impeachment very feebly, if at all, and was accounted ever after by his friends as a much cleverer fellow than they had taken him to be. He still retains the reputation of having perpetrated this jest; and if we have given a different aspect to the circumstances, so far as he is concerned, it must be remembered that this purports to be only a work of fiction.

CHAPTER IV.

“ Ah ! let me turn the page, nor chronicle,
In many words, the death of Faith, or tell
Of meetings by the newly-risen moon;
Of passionate silence 'midst the brown bird's tune ;
Of wild tears wept within the noontide shade ;
Of wild vows spoken, that of old were made
For other ears, when, amidst other flowers,
He wandered through the love-begetting hours.
Suffice it, that unhappy was each day
Which without speech from Glauce passed away ;
And troublous dreams would visit him at night,
When day had passed, all barren of her sight.”

‘ *The Life and Death of Jason*,’ xvi. 706.

ANOTHER and more serious blow had meanwhile fallen on Leroy. There had been for some time a growing discontent among the shareholders of the National Ironworks Company, which had culminated in the Board of

Directors being forced to resign, and their place being filled by others.

Sir Irving Allix, an addle-headed, though worthy soul, had never been fit for his position as chairman ; besides which, he was comfortably enough circumstanced now not to care to persist in fulfilling an office that bored him excessively, and which he did not understand. He, however, volunteered to give his successor every information he possibly could, as to the details of the previous management of the Company, and had several interviews with him for that purpose.

During one of these he quite innocently revealed how preliminaries had originally been settled between Leroy and him, with the result, as we know, that £90,000 of the purchase-money was paid over to the former gentleman, and no mention of the agreement on that point had been made in the prospectus.

The new chairman, who was a thorough man of business, concealed his feelings on hearing this, so as not to alarm Sir Irving ; but asked him if he would object to depositing the agreement in question at the office, so that all the papers connected with the Company might then be complete and in order.

The good Sir Irving, as guileless as a child, had not the slightest objection, and the next day procured from his solicitor his copy of the agreement, and sent it in to the office of the Company, with his compliments to the chairman.

As soon as it became apparent that there was no doubt about the £90,000 really having gone to Leroy, the solicitor of the Company was instructed to take such steps as might be necessary for the recovery of it.

Now Leroy was anticipating no danger in this quarter, for the shares were still at par, and therefore no individual holder was at all

likely to attack him, since the price originally paid for them could easily be obtained in the open market.

The undertaking had, in fact, succeeded in supporting its load of promotion money, though it had not been so successful as some had hoped. But legal gentlemen again exercised their minds, and decided that the Company itself had a valid claim against Leroy for misrepresentation—the measure of damages being this same £90,000, which, whatever the engineer's reports might say, was manifestly a payment in excess of what the property really cost. Not but what the case would be different had such a sale been made to an independent individual, or company not represented by Leroy. It was the fact of promoting the National Ironworks Company himself that fixed him in a fiduciary capacity towards it, and made him bound to account for everything he received, whether

it came directly or indirectly from the Company.

An ordinary trustee is always compelled by the court to do this, though the person for whom he acts is able in many cases to exercise rational supervision over him. How much more, therefore, must a promoter, over whom at first the Company he forms can have no command whatever, be confined within the very strictest lines, so that he may not draw any secret benefit from his charge in any shape or form.

Some such arguments as these were excogitated, with the result, that Leroy found himself about to figure in an action in which the National Ironworks Company, Limited, would be the plaintiffs; and though he had some hopes of defending himself, still the publicity and scandal would be most damaging to his future prospects. If, however, he was beaten, how was he to pay up the money? It was

impossible that he could do so. What, then, remained but bankruptcy, and an enforced resignation of his seat in Parliament ?

Amid the various reflections arising from this state of affairs, the idea of utilizing Henry kept gaining more and more ground. Could he but once get that gay youth into a corner and fairly compromised, then he could force him to aid in paying off whatever might be requisite. This at least was one of the props on which he must depend. And without more ado he wrote Henry a pressing invitation to come and spend a week with them before the Oxford term began ; they had now got into their new abode near Chesterton, and the 'Missis' especially wanted him to assist in arranging pictures, &c. There was also a letter from Kate, urging him to come, and so—to make a long story short—he went.

Arrived at the town of Chesterton, now so

familiar to him from the electioneering campaign, he found a most smart and well-appointed trap to meet him, and was driven through two or three miles of lovely country, till, turning off the road, they entered by the lodge gates into Brancksey Park, where the acquired domain of his friend began. A very beautiful park it was, abounding in elm-trees of magnificent growth, and affording the very richest verdure to the Highland cattle that might be seen here and there in considerable numbers. The place had belonged to a noble family who had long been in great difficulties, until at length they succeeded in completing arrangements for the sale of the estate, so as to invest the proceeds at better interest. In this way it happened that the new member for Chester-ton was able to get hold of it,—or rather, of course his wife's trustees purchased it, though he was the ostensible owner.

Crossing the brow of an opposing slope,

after some three quarters of a mile had been traversed, Henry came in view of the house—a massive old stone building, with any amount of room in it, lying at the foot of the declivity, with a grand expanse of velvety lawn on beyond in the front, at the foot of which was a glassy sheet of ornamental water; and further away, trees, shrubs, and brushwood, and a generally rougher aspect of affairs, which formed a not unpleasing contrast to all that was up to that point so carefully kept.

Soon he drove up to the door, and there was Leroy to meet him, all smiles and cordiality; while Kate, into whose presence he was quickly ushered, failed utterly to avoid an apparent confusion, which did not escape the sharp eye of her husband. There was also present her brother Jack, who, having of course failed to pass his examination, had taken refuge in this manner from the parental wrath; and another, who seemed by this time quite

an old friend—Lady Geraldine Quantock, completed the small party. She had taken something of a liking for Kate, whom she saw to be utterly helpless in the management of household affairs, and had come over to stay for a week or so, and help her to so organize matters that the establishment should be worthy of the Conservative representative of Chesterton. She was very glad to see Henry, and told him so without the slightest hesitation, from which that discreet youth augured that, so far as she was concerned, there had not been up to the present any ideas of tender feeling for him, though at one time he had almost thought otherwise.

Everything was done on the best scale at Brancksey Park now, though as for the mistress, it was not long before even Henry saw she was a complete child in the hands of her servants. He and Leroy and Jack soon became very jovial together; and the two ladies, though

as opposite in character as it was possible to be, got on exceedingly well, and indeed, we may say, established a complete friendship.

Now, during this destined week of Henry's stay it may be thought we shall detail much of what occurred; but this would serve no useful purpose. There are certain broad facts, for instance, that Leroy contrived to have him and Kate left as much as possible together, that Jack became hopelessly enamoured of Lady Geraldine—very hopelessly indeed, we should say—that Henry gave way more than ever he had done to the attractions of the situation, and that Kate herself was growing more and more blind to all the outside world, so long as he was but with her.

Leroy, despite his fixed and deliberate purpose, was still human, and so, prone to jealousy. At times the cares and anxieties of his position weighed heavily upon him; and then to see her, who, after all, was his wife,

so bound up in another, even though it might serve his ends, still it caused him a feeling of irritable unrest, and a frame of mind that might at any moment prove dangerous to the lovers.

But he was a man who by long business habits had schooled himself into the art of keeping calm and collected. He had an end in view, and he would work up to it steadily and quietly, no matter what might occur to stir up the temper or enrage the mind.

There was no doubt of his self-control so long as he was himself; but the only question was, how far the other troubles were weighing him down. He had taken to drinking more than usual of late. The wines in the cellar were many and choice; every night did he insist on a thorough trial of something that was quite out of the common, winding up the night with billiards, copious brandies-and-sodas, and early refreshers the next morning.

Henry, who was no drinker, still was always ready to do as others did, and, what is more to the point, was capable of doing it without apparent injury. Jack Hamilton would drink any amount any one pleased to offer him, so that he generally ended the evening in a totally fuddled state.

This was a strange state of things to come upon in the house of a newly-married couple ; but so it was. The servants, being subjected merely to an effete housekeeper, ran complete riot below-stairs ; but, so long as dinners were well served, and the work—such as it was—done, what did it matter ? and as for the expense, which naturally waxed more and more, why that's " of no consequence," as Mr. Toots would say.

Now the only sensible individual in the lot under the circumstances was Lady Geraldine. Lookers-on see most of the game, and she was not long before she discovered how the land

lay between Kate and Henry ; but Leroy she could not make out. She was sure he was a sharp, clever man, and yet he gave no token of having discovered what was going on. She herself was very sorry for what she saw. She was gradually getting more attached to Kate,—a sort of protecting attachment it was, such as the strong feel for the weak, and there could be no doubt now that Kate was most thoroughly weak, though none might have anticipated it, looking at her earlier career. The incident of her compulsory marriage seemed to have slackened all the fibres of her nature, and left her quite unfit to cope with the difficulties of every-day life. And as for Henry, Lady Geraldine, from experience of him at the election, knew that he was fit for something better than this, and would fain have expounded to him what a young fool he was making of himself in her opinion ; but she knew well that would do no good. She was inter-

ested in him, she could not exactly tell how or why ; somehow she felt that he was wasting himself, and of course it was such a pity.

As to Jack, he was a mere nothing, and served as a foil by which she could make the others think she was not noticing them. It wasn't wrong to trifle with him ; he was so young that he would forget it in a few weeks.

Thus from a liking for Kate, and a certain admiration for Henry, she waited her opportunity to if possible smooth out these remarkable complications ; but Lady Geraldine, though very sensible and very practical, had never been in love, and, moreover, was young, so that she was liable enough to make a mistake.

Henry himself retained sufficient sense to see that there must be some ulterior design lurking behind his host's apparent desire to retain him with them ; and as he kept yielding to pleasure, and staying on and on long after the Oxford term had commenced, he none the

less was cautious, and had his eyes open so far as he could, likewise his ears and wits, lest worse should come of it.

The tension of the situation and the strangeness of it went very far to elevate the youthful imagination. Love, high, pure, ideal, beyond what romance had ever pictured, seemed to have centred in them, and was very apt to carry them to much extravagance. Absence from each other became more and more unbearable, until at last they took to coming down-stairs again at night, when Leroy, as was now invariably the case, had sunk into a half-drunken sleep on the couch in his dressing-room, and all else were supposed to be at rest. Thus they held sweet commune by the replenished embers of the drawing-room fire, and the bright moon would shine out in the clear frosty sky, and look calm and placid on them when they raised the blinds to gaze upon her as they stood side by side.

Oh ! how many then were the bewailings of that accursed marriage-tie ! How dark did the future seem, like the distant woods, and yet their love was fair and bright as the water glistening there beneath the moon-beams ; fair and bright, we say, and in a sense innocent, except for its utter folly.

“ Oh, Henry,” said she, on one of these nights, “ how can all this end ? ”

“ I don’t know, and at present I am so happy I don’t care.”

“ Don’t say that. I do so fear some ill coming of it. He has been very different lately, so strange, half mad, I should say, at times. Do you know the other day he said he had a good mind to shoot both you and me ? ”

“ Indeed ! much obliged to him, I’m sure ; but I don’t think he’ll do that.”

“ I’m not so certain. He looked so wild and savage when he said it, and he said other horrible things that I can’t tell you ; but

afterwards he seemed sorry, and asked to be forgiven."

"I should think so indeed! fancy treating you like that!"

"But, Henry, I'm frightened of him. He takes so much to drink now, and looks quite like a madman before an evening is over. I lock my room door every night, for I am really terrified of him. There is no telling what he might do when he is like that. I often think the feeling that he has given me the power over his money irritates him so that he will kill me to get it back again."

"Nonsense, dear. Why his creditors would get it then; it would make him as badly off as if he had not married you at all."

"I don't know, I'm sure; but I am so afraid of him. He's not accountable for his actions when he's like that; and only last night I heard him trying to pick the lock between his room and mine. He didn't manage to do it;

but what, what am I to do if he does get it open, and comes in in that awful state?"

Henry was silent awhile. "Take old 'Tip' the terrier to sleep in your room; he'll bark at him, won't he?"

"Yes, I think he will. I'll do that. But perhaps he won't mind the barking, and oh! what am I to do then?" and Kate burst into tears at the very thought.

Now tears cannot be endured by the male mind; and at the sight of them Henry felt that he must needs act the knight-errant to the uttermost on behalf of this poor damsel.

"If the worst comes to the worst," whispered he, "come to me, and never fear I will protect you."

Kate continued to sob. "Yes, yes, I will; anything, no matter what people may say of me, is better than being left with him."

And still the moon shone down on the pair with a smooth, innocent light; the countless

stars irradiated the infinite arch of sky, and the reflections glittered and sparkled on the glassy surface of the water in the front. There was a lovely calmness and quietude outside, and everything tended to draw out sentiment from the dullest heart.

No dull hearts were theirs, but very impressionable. Otherwise they had not stood there, for there were many dangers. Leroy might have picked the lock of that door in the absence of Kate, and what then? He might, but less probably, have heard her steal downstairs, and have come down after her. What then? He might have come downstairs by chance, and what then?

The fact was, discretion was fast vanishing even from Henry, at least so far as these evening interviews were concerned. He was becoming more and more reckless, and, what with the difficulties, the doubts, the dangers, and the romance of the thing, he

was giving way to a regular flare-up of delusive love.

Now there is one test of delusive love, and that is when the victim of it finds him or herself able to deliver poetical sentiments after due thought given thereto. We do not believe the true lover ever quoted poetry. He should be far too engrossed to do so. On the other hand, the ordinary flirt, the sham, the make-believe, the man who deceives even himself as to the state of his feelings, can all deliver the most florid sentences, make the prettiest of speeches, and write the most passion-padded letters.

And Henry was now saying something very appropriate, was now discoursing of the moon, the aspect of nature, and the unsmooth course of true love, all of which it is no business of ours to inflict upon our readers. His arm had insensibly stolen on by little and little until it was round that waist where it had never

been before, and certainly ought not to have been then. Her head sank on his shoulder, and their eyes met with the irresistible medium of love expressed between them.

Suddenly a hand was laid on each of their shoulders, and they started as if each had received a mortal thrust.

The hands were those of Lady Geraldine, who, with the peculiar instinct of women, had discovered that the two were accustomed to meet in this way ; and she had come with the best of motives to try and bring them back to their senses.

They form a strange group, standing there in the moonlight, not one of the three for a while speaking a word : Kate and Henry failing from sheer confusion, and Lady Geraldine, despite her good resolves, much embarrassed by the situation which she had herself created. All in a moment it flashed before her that she was thinking to assume a position which could

only be suitable for some very old friend of one or both of the parties, whereas she was really but a recent acquaintance, and a young one too. The very force of her character, and the weakness of Kate's, had led her to usurp most rapidly a sort of right to look after her. But was she justified in proceeding to this length? Might not her motives be misconstrued?

While they are yet standing, and the tableau is not broken by speech or movement, there is a step close at hand, and Leroy walks into the room; but half dressed, wild and uncouth in look, with a pistol in his hand!

He catches sight of Henry, as it seems, and levels the pistol full at him. It is an unpleasant thing to look down the barrel of any such weapon when an angry person is behind it, and the sensations of the gay youth are decidedly uncomfortable. Nevertheless, he has an instinctive feeling that the man will instantly

fire if he retreats or shows a sign of fear, so he looks him straight in the face, and remains motionless.

For an instant—which seems ages—they stand, the pale face of the husband showing, ghastly in the wan light, a conflict of passions that is terrible to behold; the bold and seemingly fearless gaze of the lover fronting imminent death without a shadow of hesitation. Kate is spell-bound with terror, and Lady Geraldine almost gives way. She, however, by a supreme effort nerves herself.

“Mr. Leroy,” she cries, “are you mad?”

He drops his hand with a start.

“*You* here, Lady Geraldine? I must have been asleep. I thought I had caught some burglars. Jolliffe, I beg you ten thousand pardons. I was awoke by a noise, and came down to see what it was. Upon my word I thought you were a burglar.”

Kate at this moment fell down in a dead faint, so terribly had she been alarmed.

“Kate here too!” said Leroy, rubbing his eyes with well-feigned surprise as he ran forward to help her. “Steady ; she’ll be all right directly. What *have* you all been about ?”

“Never mind what we’ve been about,” said Lady Geraldine ; “don’t you see you’ve nearly frightened Kate to death ? Let’s see to her before anything else.”

Henry felt grateful to her for thus changing the subject ; but, nevertheless, he was awfully apprehensive of what she might say afterwards.

Leroy too. Was it true what he said about the mistake he had made ? or had he ascertained what was going on, and come down in a fit of mad rage to wreak his vengeance, not seeing, in his blind passion, that there was a third member of the party—Lady Geraldine—until she spoke ?

To us too the matter must remain somewhat of a mystery, and we can only suggest that it is likely Leroy, as he had given way more and more to drink, was suffering mere passion to override and at times thwart his deliberate purpose. The expression of his face when he levelled that pistol showed more than mere animosity against a burglar. Doubtless it was true he did not see Lady Geraldine ; and probably she saved Henry's life ; though even without her the man's strong reason might have mastered his vindictive instincts, so that he might have seen before it was too late—had only the two been present—that he had gained the vantage-ground he had been all along striving for, and might now avail himself to the utmost of the position.

Kate lies without a movement on the sofa to which she has been borne. Her husband—now a completely changed being—runs for water ; Lady Geraldine for a light ; Henry

remains, keeping guard over the inanimate form. As he watches her the beautiful eyes open.

“Where am I? Henry, *dear*, is that you? Oh! I remember all now. You are not hurt? Has she told him? Oh! what shall we do?”

He has no answer to give to this last question, for indeed there seem dark clouds overhanging them, with never a ray of light piercing through. In very hopelessness he feels drawn towards her and she to him. He kneels down by her side and kisses those lips he has never touched before, and this without hesitation, for it seems a natural outcome of the situation.

“My darling, while we love each other it matters not what other people do. Let things take their course, and don’t be afraid. Hush! they are coming.”

Thus are things made rather worse by Lady

Geraldine's interference, for the two come closer together in what they deem to be the hour of danger; and once advanced so far they are not likely to go back again.

The light and the water arrive, but Kate is found to have nearly recovered.

"You must be an excellent doctor, Jolliffe?" says Leroy, in a way that may mean a great deal.

"I'm afraid there's no credit due to me; however, I'm glad it's no worse."

"Now perhaps you'll tell me," continued Leroy, as they sat down for a while near Kate, "what dark plot you three were concocting that led to these disastrous consequences."

"Well, I'll tell you now," replies Lady Geraldine, looking for an instant at the perturbed couple, and appearing to enjoy keeping them in suspense as to what she will say. "Mr. Jolliffe said he saw a ghost moving over the water there when he was looking from his bed-

room window the other night, and we declared it could not be. He told us to watch for ourselves ; but then we durst not do that by ourselves ; and so it resulted in us all three agreeing to come and investigate together from this room at midnight. We didn't tell you, for we knew you'd laugh at us."

A half-sigh of relief escaped Kate ; and Henry could scarce repress a smile.

"Did you see this ghost then ?"

"No ; you interrupted us just as we were expecting it."

"I am very sorry ; however, I will wish you better luck next time ; and now, if you're quite recovered, Kate dear, I think we had better all quit this scene and repair to rest."

So no harm had come of it as yet ; and the party retired—two of them with feelings of considerable gratitude towards Lady Geraldine, and Leroy himself hardly knowing what to think, but determined to bide his time.

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Henry, when he was alone that night, reflected somewhat seriously on the state of affairs. What could it all mean? Why, if Leroy really entertained hostile feelings towards him, did he still keep pressing him to stay on with them? Would it not be better to depart before worse came of it? Oh, no! if Kate was in danger he must not leave her; and besides, it would be like closing a book while you were in the middle of the most exciting part. He would be very careful and cautious in future, but he must see the issue of this remarkable train of circumstances.

The very next day came a telegram for Lady Geraldine to go home, as a young brother of hers was dangerously ill, and she had positively no opportunity of saying anything serious to Kate on the previous night's performances. She departed, not altogether regretted, remarking at the last, "I hope, Mr.

Jolliffe, you won't be so silly as to go looking for that ghost again."

Henry laughed lightly, but Kate looked foolish, and Leroy, on whom nothing was lost, saw that there was more in this speech than the ordinary signification of the words.

Then were these three and Jack left in the house together; and the restraint of a lady visitor thus being removed, more than ever did the master of the establishment give way to copious potations and continual carousals. Care, trouble, annoyance, and disaster were closing thick upon him, and he was now striving desperately to court at least a temporary oblivion of them. The man's very countenance became changed. At one time it had displayed reason and firmness in a marked degree; now it seemed to vacillate and shift between opposite extremes, and to partake as much of the animal as the rational.

Scarcely a night came now when he had

not the greatest difficulty in staggering upstairs, and he would just throw himself down on his little couch, and fall into gross sleep with all his clothes on. No wonder poor Kate double-locked her door when she knew that this was his regular condition.

Henry felt that he was dangerous, but only if he saw himself feared. Instinctively he was convinced that so long as he for his part remained firm and unflinching he would suffer no harm. It was that same instinct which makes a wise man when a dog rushes at him stand still, knowing that thus he will be safe ; while the foolish one, who flees, suffers in the calf of his leg or elsewhere.

The relations between the parties were growing—to use a diplomatic phrase—decidedly strained, for the more Leroy drank the more did he become apt to break out against the situation he had in his calm moments deliberately schemed to bring about.

It maddened him too that he could not prove anything with certainty, and so indeed at times now he became fairly distraught.

All sorts of evil designs came floating like black spectres before his mind's eye; and among other things, his soul, if he may be said to have had one, rebelled against the idea of a wife who dared to lock her doors. In calmer moments, and in the day-time, he feared her on account of her power over the money; but in the stupid intervals, between sodden sleep, or when drink fired his waking thoughts, he often grew reckless, and would try by various means to open that door. The door was a very stout one, and the lock very peculiar and strong, so that without making a loud noise it was really next to impossible to overcome it; but he was not a man to be beaten easily.

It was by a happy intuition one night Henry said to her, "If ever he mixes you

anything to drink before going to bed be sure you don't take it ; carry it up-stairs with you ;" and actually that very night Leroy feigned an alarm that she had caught cold, and insisted on preparing for her something hot. This, with a look at Henry, she took away with her, and afterwards in due course all the household were in bed.

Henry's room was down a long passage far away from Kate's ; but after sleeping a while he woke with a start. What was that noise ? A peculiar grating sound. He starts up, opens the door, and listens. Yes, it is, it must be, Leroy trying to unscrew the lock of that door between his room and hers. Hark ! that is Tip's bark ! With every nerve strung to the uttermost Henry stands. It is a still clear night, when every slightest sound may be heard. Still the grating goes on. There is a noise of the key turning in the door of her room which leads on to the landing. Her

hand is doubtless on that door, ready for instant flight if he gets in through the other. This is indeed a supreme moment.

In breathless attention with beating heart Henry listens ; another second, and there may come a climax, of a scuffle and a rush down the passage towards him !

Quickly he decided what to do if this happened. He would let her in ; lock and barricade the door ; but how to act after that he knew not. Certain it was he would protect her ; but what a position it was ! All this while he was quickly and quietly dressing to be ready for the emergency. How Tip is barking now ! He will wake the whole house.

* * * * *

The grating noise has ceased ; the dog has stopped the performance ; and this night it goes on no more.

Henry procured afterwards some of the contents of that tumbler of drink, and had it

analyzed, when it was found to contain laudanum enough to send any one into a very deep and heavy sleep. Leroy, thinking she had drunk this, had made sure he could get into her room without waking her by the noise ; and once there, he assured himself, with malignant animosity, he would teach her who was the master, and whether he was to be treated in this way. What might have happened goodness only knows ; fortunately a disaster was averted.

Kate was becoming more and more terrified at the prospects, and indeed the clouds were fast darkening to a storm ; but a providential demand came for Leroy's immediate presence in town ; and Henry, under the circumstances, of course arranged to go off to Oxford. The party was thus quietly broken up at a moment when it seemed to require but another touch to cause the crash of some culminating catastrophe among them.

CHAPTER V.

“ Dame Alice sits lonely in bower and hall,
Her sighs they rise and her tears they fall :
 She sits alone, and she makes her moan ;
 Dance and song she considers quite wrong ;
 Feast and revel mere snares of the devil ;
She mendeth her hose, and she crieth, ‘ Alack !
When will Sir Ingoldsby Bray come back ? ’ ”

“ Thou liest, thou liest, thou naughty foot page,
Full loud dost thou lie, false page, to me ! ”
 ‘ *The Ingoldsby Penance.* ’

WE must now get forward somewhat rapidly, and not dwell on the details of the next few months. The plot had all the while been thickening ; and Leroy himself, as financial trouble came nearer and still more near, had never in his calmer moments ceased from his design of getting Henry into a position from

which he could be compelled to pay up a large sum of money. But he was all this while becoming less and less master of himself as he gave way more and more to drink ; and at such periods the natural instinctive feelings of the man came out so that it was manifest he cherished the most deadly hatred for Henry, and the most bitter resentment against Kate, on account of that very attachment to which in reality he looked for the achievement of his purposes.

The consequence was, his whole life was henceforward a most conflicting study. He would invite Henry constantly and most kindly to stay with them ; he would take Kate to Oxford, and let her be as much with her strange lover as possible ; indeed, he would appear to entertain for Henry the most effusive friendship. Then at other times his face would darken into anger ; malice would flash from his eyes, and he would say the most cutting and

offensive things, as if the sight of the pair he had thus brought together was intolerable to him. Nay, it seemed that he would be glad of some slight excuse to resort to violence.

His rival—if rival indeed he could be called—never for a moment feared him. The same feeling that a quiet, steady, and unruffled demeanour would check the other's intemperate spirit still remained with him, and so he was always complacent and secure. But it was a trying time for Kate, who lived in constant apprehension; indeed, it was this more than anything else that drew her so irresistibly to Henry for protection; and it was, perhaps, pity for her distress, as much as any other sentiment, that made him anxious to be always with her. He had thoroughly seen all Kate's faults now: her utter incompetence as the mistress of a house, her weakness, childishness, and folly; but what matter? Here was an

adventure that must be seen the last of ; here was a pretty woman that must be defended. This is not of course the form Henry's thoughts took then, but we believe it was none the less the basis of his action.

The spring had passed, and the summer was creeping on ; Doncaster had astonished the racing world by winning the Derby, a circumstance which appeared to profit few except his astute trainer. Ascot, too, had passed, with its wonderful finish between Gang Forward and Kaiser for the Prince of Wales Stakes, when the scion of the "accursed Blacklock" tribe equalized the score by getting his head in front of his old antagonist. Prince Charlie had come brilliantly through more than one ordeal, and the marvellous two-year-old Ecossais had more than maintained the prestige of the Blair Athol blood by his deeds. Poor old Ecossais ! There were not wanting those who said he would not stand much training, and still we

find him in this present year of 1880 among the entries for certain races.

Then there had been the first Cobham sale, which was a great success, and Captain Machell had performed the memorable feat of springing a thousand in one bid when he gave 2000 guineas for Claremont—a sum which that unfortunate horse came near getting back when he ran second for the Derby of his year.

Leroy had more than once figured prominently in the House of Commons ; but it was in a fitful sort of way, for the load of care that was accumulating weighed him down and unfitted him for any sort of work. He could see no possible way of keeping the claim of the National Ironworks Company in abeyance much longer. He had hoped to effect a compromise with them, but his negotiation on that head fell through, and legal process was now imminent.

In the midst of this Parliament was pro-

rogued, and partly at Kate's wish, partly in furtherance of his own design, he took her off to spend a month or two at Scarbro, where he invited Henry to join them. No second invitation was needed, and a very short time saw the party comfortably installed at the Royal Hotel, where Leroy had taken rooms.

Now, if there is one place more than another in England to which Kate and Henry ought not in wisdom to have gone it is Scarbro. Partaking, as it does, of quite a continental character, it seems at certain times of the year to be a very hot-bed for fostering indiscretion, and the whole atmosphere of the place savours somewhat of laxity.

Very charming has Scarbro been to us, however, from our youth upwards; whether we have kept holiday there in July and August, among the gay inhabitants of Bradford, Leeds, Halifax, Huddersfield, and similar towns, who most do congregate there about that time; or

whether we have waited for the Leger, and gone for our share of the ozone among the more fashionable fry.

What balls—how countless in number and how remarkable in quality!—have we there frequented! How many miles have we paraded up and down the Spa, listening to the never-ceasing flow of gossip and scandal! How many times have we entered the sacred precincts of Marshall and Snelgrove, to come out again perchance with lighter pockets, but heavier hearts! To us the very *table-d'hôte* business was a source of amusement, and the life of the hotel drawing-room was full of the most comic elements. But Leroy was not one to care for that sort of thing; besides, he wanted his intended dupes to be alone together as much as possible; and he therefore had a private suite for the accommodation of the party.

But despite all this Henry and Kate gave

him no opportunity such as he wished. They were simply like ordinary lovers, whose engagement was likely to be indefinitely protracted. They had both schooled themselves into thinking no more of the form of marriage that had been gone through than they would of any other obstacle that might have occurred to prevent their union. They regretted it deeply enough, but never contemplated it as anything that rendered their present conduct wrong. Still, none the less their affection—if affection it might be termed—was on the increase, and it was quite possible that some ill-timed demonstration of it might be observed and misconstrued ; but caution was not yet absent from them, and no such untoward event happened, so that the watching husband began to grow enraged at his bad success in not discovering what would, if discovered, have probably enraged him still more.

There are many more, besides him on the

look out, for they are in Yorkshire now, and the fame of Henry's conduct has gone forth ; so that there are old maiden ladies, weak-minded men, and others who derive huge pleasure in investigating and discussing the case. Indeed, the matter is now notorious, though the chief parties have no idea of that. Kate never dreams that any one would venture to speak ill of her, and Henry never bothers his head about it at all.

Happily did the days pass during that glorious summer-time. The whole round of pleasures went on, and Pritchard's Band would often supply music that seemed indeed "the food of love." Most desirable, too, were the balls, held in the excellent room of the hotel ; not altogether what they should have been, perhaps, but full of life and go, and to some small extent, at any rate, select, as a certain well-known baronet found to his cost when he wished to introduce two of his lady friends,

but declined to give their names. Rumour has it, that on that occasion he and mine host were nearly coming to blows, but discretion prevailed, and he of the blood-red hand thought better of his pugilistic designs.

But among those present would be many very remarkable specimens, such, for instance, as a very fat old lady, who looked as if she had brought all the diamonds from some large jewel-shop upon her spacious person. Such diamonds they were too ! so immense, and so numerous ! Her lace, moreover, was said by experts to be of marvellous quality and value. But then all this only served to show how such adornments are powerless to lend beauty where it is not, or to add the glamour of a charm where age and obesity hold sway.

Gentlemen might be seen, likewise plentifully jewelled, who would dance in strange fashions, holding their partners' hands round

behind their own backs, or committing some other eccentricities. One or two eminent actresses would sometimes be present under the charge of aged admirers ; and not a few ladies, against whom Sir James Hannen had pronounced a decree *nisi*, without any probability that the Queen's proctor would intervene.

Into the full tide of amusement did Leroy press his wife, thinking that so any strait-laced ideas she might have would disappear, and among it all Henry was constantly at her side ; but still the claim of the National Iron-works Company was becoming more urgent, and still the opportunity to mulct him in hush-money did not occur.

One morning, while the three were sitting at lunch, a telegram was brought in for Leroy, whose countenance changed visibly when he read it. He rose hastily.

“ I must go off to town,” said he, “ to-night : my aunt died yesterday, and I shall have

to see after everything, besides attending her funeral."

"Poor old lady! I'm so sorry, though I never knew her," said Kate in a tone of genuine sympathy, which for a moment softened her husband's hard, emotionless features. "But what am I to do, Frank?"

"Oh, you'll stop here, of course. I shall be back in a couple of days; and I'm sure Jolliffe will look after you."

A deep blush spread over her face, partly from confusion, partly, we fear, from pleasure at the idea.

"Oh, but—"

"But me no buts," interposed the husband, assuming an even jocular tone. "It will be all right. No one will know I'm not here."

"But, my dear fellow," broke in Henry, who had been up to then speechless with astonishment at the proposal, "I'm sure it

would be better for me to go away too until you return."

"Nonsense, man! If I don't object, why should any one else? The Missis couldn't exist without you. I mean, of course, she couldn't get on at all here without some one to look after her. I am sure you will stay when I tell you I shall take it as a great favour if you do."

"Well, of course if you really wish it I have nothing more to say."

"That's right. Now I must see about getting some traps put up;" and Leroy left the room in a very excited state.

He had good cause for excitement, for he fully expected his aunt would have left him the whole of her fortune, which, in spite of what he had already spent out of it, still would amount to fully £100,000, and with that sum his troubles would be at an end; but, on the other hand, was the horrible fear that she might have left

him nothing ; and then, how should he account for the Bonds, which, as we have seen, he had converted to his own use, by availing himself of his position as trustee ?

Oh, but it was impossible ! She had no other living relation except himself, and he had always been on the best of terms with her ; so he dismissed all forebodings of that sort, congratulated himself on the probable acquisition of the balance of her money, bade a cheerful adieu to Kate and Henry, and departed on his way.

And what of the two thus left together ? With respect to them he had acted in this manner partly from force of circumstances, but chiefly because he thought, if the worst came to the worst, and the aunt had not left him her money, the position he had left them in was calculated—if anything was—to bring about the complication he required, and the consequent paying up on the part of Henry. Above all

would it be necessary in such a case, for it would be a criminal matter were it discovered that he had appropriated his aunt's Bonds. He had little fear of not inheriting the property, but it was well to prepare against all emergencies.

They were for all the world like two children released from school when he had gone : there seemed so much freedom, and no fear of interference. They had not accompanied him to the station, lest attention should thus be drawn to his departure ; but they went and sat on the Esplanade, simply revelling in their position. Nevertheless, that Henry was by no means hopelessly enamoured—if enamoured at all — was illustrated by the fact that he took care to order an unusually good dinner that evening, for it seemed to him a suitable occasion upon which to eat, drink, and be merry.

They can cook well at the Royal upon occasion, and they have some Irroy which is

particularly pleasing to the cultured palate. This indeed did he think as he waxed jovial over that repast, and Kate thought she had never loved him so much before, as he sat there with an unusual sparkle in his eyes, and seemed brim-full of fun and happiness.

Afterwards they must needs go on the Spa, but thinking it well not to come too much under notice, they obtained chairs right back in the corner opposite the band, and sat quietly looking at the various people, or at one another. Now, close by where they sat is a door leading through the back wall, which protects the sitters, into the walks beyond, and men kept continually coming in and out of this door, admitting a wretched draught every time they did so ; and as the evening was rather chill, this state of affairs became rapidly unbearable to Henry, who felt fit to cope with anything and anybody.

Consequently, seeing a small ring attached

to the door by way of handle, he tried to hook his stick into it, but found that the stick was too large. Kate's umbrella, however, would do, and hastily taking it, he caught up the ring with it and held on firmly. Presently some one came to the door and pulled from the other side; Henry pulled also with the umbrella, and so the door refused to open.

Meanwhile the band was discoursing the very sweetest music, and the place was full of people. The individual who had thus been foiled at the door was evidently, however, not satisfied. He went away, and in a little came back, as was afterwards seen, with one of the officials to examine into the matter.

The official endeavoured to effect an entrance, with no better success, and then the man who had summoned him also took hold, and the two hauled away together. This was rather more than Henry could manage, even though he got up on his feet now, and stuck manfully

to the umbrella. Slowly the door was being dragged open in spite of his efforts, when Kate, who also felt a bit wild that night, jumped up, and seizing hold of the umbrella lent him her best assistance, so that the balance of power being thus restored, the door was triumphantly pulled back again, and the assailants for a moment defeated.

Great excitement was caused by this remarkable occurrence.

“Stick to it,” cried some one in the immediate vicinity, encouraging the pair, and all heads were turned to see what was going on, and what might result. The end soon came: a heavy pull from outside, strongly resisted from the inside, and the ring in which the umbrella was hooked broke right in two; the door flew open, and Kate and Henry, instead of falling backwards, which they might well have done, dropped very fortunately into their respective chairs. The assailants had

of course staggered back also when victory came upon them thus unexpectedly, and so they did not dash in upon the foe so quickly as they ought to have done with a view to detecting who the guilty parties were. When they did enter,—the official with passion depicted on his countenance,—every one appeared totally innocent and unconcerned; no one thought of giving information, and so they were obliged to leave the insult unavenged. The only result that it had was to draw the special attention of those who had been spectators to the two principals in the matter, and the busy gossips soon made great capital of the way Mrs. Leroy had been behaving, coupled with the fact that she was out in the late evening without her husband.

But the indiscreet couple had enjoyed the joke thoroughly, and returned to the hotel in excellent spirits. They went quietly, however, up-stairs without committing more atrocities,

and sat them down for a long talk. Very sweet was the converse they held together; but it would serve no useful purpose to detail it, only it was terribly late when they parted for the harmless necessary sleep. The next day passed in a perfect delirium of happiness, and the evening, though not signalled by any such performance as the previous one, was none the less bright and gloriously delightful.

Meanwhile Leroy, whose heart kept sinking as he came nearer to his destination, had at last arrived, and attended the funeral of his aunt. The will came, and, not to make a long story of it, his worst fears were realized: she had left every penny of her fortune to various charities, with the exception of £15 to himself for the purchase of a mourning-ring!

Powers of darkness, what a collapse was here! Conglomerating clouds of distraction and dismay, now at last to burst over his ill-fated head; the roar of the tempest, the

black demons of misfortune borne on the rushing blast, all, all are upon him at last, and he cannot but be hurled and whirled away until he alights in a felon's cell, where perhaps he will repent his sins !

It is impossible the fact of his having sold all those Bonds can long be kept secret. There is but one chance : he must succeed in his designs against Henry, and make him advance the requisite sum. Failing this, after all it is possible to fly the country ; and—happy thought !—he can still lay his hands on some £5000 of his aunt's money that is lying at the Bank. So lax have the arrangements been that the other trustees have permitted cheques to be signed by him alone. He will draw that money out at once ; and probably he can in any case borrow a large sum from Henry. The situation is desperate, but not yet hopeless.

He would return to Scarbro unexpectedly—

that would be at once—without warning. Who knows then but that fate might befriend him? It is necessary, he tells those who are interested in the proving of the will, that he should go to look up some papers and documents he has by mistake left behind; and so he departs northward in a state of mind to which no enterprise or evil deed would come very much amiss.

He travels through the night, but dreams not of sleep, so much is his brain excited by the agitating prospect before him. The man is no coward after all. He is nerving himself, and regaining his old powers of concentrating thought and carrying purposes to effect that always marked him in his business career, but had so often been absent lately.

It was early morning when Scarbro was reached, and he walked hastily to the Royal, entering there just as the doors were opened, about six o'clock. The porter stared to see

him come in at this extraordinary time ; nor perhaps was it the time alone that aroused attention : he himself looked strangely haggard, his eyes were bloodshot, and his whole mien betokened that something had gone wrong. The porter remembered this afterwards when subsequent events led to an enquiry, but it was no business of his to think much of it at the time.

Henry was lying calmly asleep, but was suddenly awakened by that peculiar instinctive feeling of being looked at, which most of us have at times experienced.

He opened his eyes, and his surprise was great to see Leroy standing silently by his bed-side, with an expression of countenance that was absolutely fiendish.

“Halloo ! what on earth brought you here ?”

Instantly the expression changed to one of friendship.

“Oh, I thought I could get down easier by the night train, and I’ve just walked up to see if you were awake.”

“Oh, that’s it, is it? Well, I am awake now, thanks to you; but I’m not going to get up at this hour. You might let a fellow sleep in peace, even if you do go in for night traveling yourself.”

“Don’t be cross. I didn’t intend to wake you.”

“All right; never mind. Well, what’s the news?”

“As I expected, my aunt has left me all her money. But I see you’re sleepy; I’ll leave you to take it out, and we can talk in the course of the day.”

Two questions may occur. Why in reality did Leroy go up to Henry’s room in this manner? and why did he say his aunt had left him her money?

Certain it is that he had had a design

which prompted his action in the first question; but his design, whatever it was, had failed. Henry could see that from his face, and felt within himself all the time that he had triumphed. But as to this lie about the aunt's money, we shall see more anon.

When Henry eventually got down-stairs he found that Kate was before him, and had evidently been engaged in serious conversation with her husband, who left the room to get a newspaper, as he said, when the other entered.

“Oh, what do you think he has been saying? He declares he is going right away from England, just to make you and me happy!”

“My dear Kate, what do you mean? What good would his going away do? You would still be his wife.”

“No; he says he will talk to you about that, and it can be made all right.”

“If this is really so he is a better man than we have ever taken him to be, Kate; but hush! he is coming.”

Leroy here came back with something like a benign smile on his countenance, and breakfast proceeded amid a somewhat constrained silence. Kate went away afterwards, and left the two male beings together, when issue was very shortly joined.

“Tell me, Jolliffe,” said Leroy, abruptly, “you love Kate, do you not?”

Had Henry not been to a certain extent prepared for some such conversation he would have been greatly startled by this question; but as it was, he was cool enough, especially as he saw the well-known dangerous light in the other’s eye.

“Yes, I do. It seems strange to say it to you; but you ask me, and so I answer you.”

“All right; I’ve seen it for a long while.”

“But I hope you distinctly understand, that

whatever my feelings may be, there has been nothing—”

“No need to make any declarations of that sort, Jolliffe; if I had not trusted you, is it likely I should have allowed you and Kate to be so much together? Let me now know distinctly, would you marry her if you had the chance?”

“Of course I would.”

“You shall have it then.”

A strange interview this, the reader may justly think, and an improbable; but let that pass; there are more things in earth, let alone heaven, than the reader perchance wots of,—this is one of them. Let us proceed with it.

Henry was at a loss what to say now, for really he failed to comprehend what possible project could be in view, so he simply waited to hear more.

“Now, Jolliffe, I am going to show my

implicit confidence in you by telling you a certain secret which would place me entirely at the mercy of any one who knows it. I must first have your assurance that you will be kind to Kate,"—here Leroy's voice shook a little with apparent emotion,—“and that you will work hard at the Bar to make yourself a distinguished name, and so do honour to her.”

“Yes, I'll do that.”

“Then listen to me : Kate is not my wife at all !”

“Good heavens ! what do you mean ?”

“I may trust you with my secret ?”

“Of course you may, my dear fellow. Is it likely I would do you any harm ?”

“Well, then, this is it : I was married fifteen years ago to another woman, and she is still alive !”

“And can this be proved ?”

“It can : I have quite sufficient documents

to prove it myself, and I will leave them in a sealed packet with you before I go."

"Before you go?"

"Yes; I will tell you what I am going to do. This woman, my wife, whom I have kept quiet up to now, has suddenly turned quite irreconcilable. She has vowed she will assert her rights, and have me prosecuted for bigamy. This I ascertained yesterday. You must not therefore think I am conferring an overpowering obligation on you by quitting the scene and leaving Kate for you; but I do ask you to believe that a very great part of my motive in doing so is the desire to make you both happy. Were it not so I might perhaps stay and adopt some powerful means for silencing the woman who threatens me; but it would be a dangerous game, and having attained to my position, I could never bear to face disgrace and infamy."

"But why, why did you ever get into such

a complication? I never heard a whisper of it."

"Of course you never did. No, Jolliffe; time is short, and we must deal only with facts. I may write and explain, but now it will suffice to say that in this complication I am; and from it I mean to escape by flight. I am going as far away as I can to begin life anew. It will be with a heavy heart, for I have done much that I ought not; but there will be the satisfaction of at least doing the right thing by you and Kate."

"Leroy, you are a good fellow, and I thank you from my heart. But can nothing be done to avoid this?"

"Nothing, so far as I can see. Now take particular notice of what you must do. In the first place, I want you to help me with ready money; you know mine is all tied up, and I can't get a sufficient sum to take with me; I shall give you a regular charge for your

repayment out of my aunt's property that has been left to me, and indeed I shall appoint you to act for me in that matter, so that you may send me out the balance as soon as it is available. Will you do this?"

"Most certainly, to any extent I can. How much do you want?"

"I want £5000, but must be contented with what I can get."

"I can just do that, as I have been selling out some stock, and the money is lying at the Bank for reinvestment. You shall have it with all my heart."

"Thank you. The charge I give you will make it absolutely safe, and will of course include interest."

"Don't mention it; I know that's all right. I'll draw a cheque for you now."

"By the way, it won't be possible to get it cashed in Scarbro; and I want to go to-morrow."

“That’s unfortunate. There will be nothing for it but going round by Barnstaple and presenting the cheque yourself at the Bank.”

“Yes, I must do that, though it will be rather out of the way.”

So the cheque was drawn and handed over, and an elaborate legal document was signed by Leroy in the presence of the waiter, who was summoned to act as witness. This document was the one purporting to secure repayment to Henry from the aunt’s money. A power of attorney was also executed, by which he could act on Leroy’s behalf in the various necessary matters; and the legal business was thus, as it seemed, put all in order.

“Now, to make all safe, Jolliffe, I have so contrived, that when I am gone my real wife will be informed that all my aunt’s property has been left to charities. Some of these letters, which I must ask you to post,—say at York,—will do that part of the business.”

“ But what’s the use of that ? ”

“ Why, you see, she might come and push her claim forward at once, with a view to getting hold of the money. When she knows I’m gone, and thinks there is no money, she’ll keep quiet. You may trust me always to provide well for her ; but I’m sure you will see how important it will be for me to get the money without any hitch.”

“ Well, I suppose you know best. But what am I to do afterwards then ? ”

“ Oh, Kate can discover in one of my boxes the papers which, as I tell you, prove my previous marriage. These must be forwarded to her lawyers without the seal being broken, so there will be no suspicion you or she knew of the contents ; and then when it is discovered you will communicate with my wife, and arrange to have it legally settled.”

“ Shall we be able to do that in your absence ? ”

“Oh, yes; you may take my word for all the legal part of the business.”

“But amid all this, you haven’t said what Kate and I are to do here.”

“Oh, you must suppose that I am summoned off on important business, but that I’m to be back in a week; and if I’m not, that I asked you to take Kate home to Chesterton; that I also asked you and her not to write to any one about it meanwhile, for I thought her parents would be angry if they heard of me leaving her in such a way, and that if I was able to come back and take her home, as I confidently expected, they would never be any the wiser.”

“But why must we wait a week?”

“To give me a good start, of course, so that no one may be able to trace where I have gone. And mind, while I think of it, you mustn’t post those letters for a week either; they will inform my wife and some others of

my departure. There'll be nothing about it to draw suspicion on you, even if you say you posted them, for you can make out I told you it was a practical joke I wished to have carried out, in which the letters were to come from York, just as people send valentines away to be posted, you know."

"I see ; but I wish you'd write me down all these instructions, so that I can make no mistake."

"I have already done so : here you are ;" and Leroy handed Henry his brief in this remarkable case. "You will there find everything detailed that you must do ; and I advise you to burn it when you have done your part."

Such was the conversation between these gentlemen ; and Henry, though he saw much to dislike about the arrangements, was quite carried away by the one great romantic idea, and by the feeling that, after all, Leroy was

playing the part of a true friend, and being also in distress ought to be assisted, even in manners that might be questionable.

The reader, however, who is perhaps prematurely behind the scenes, knows somewhat better how far Leroy was a true friend in what he was doing, and how far he was deserving of assistance. The reader, however, is not as yet entirely behind the scenes, though it is already apparent that the alleged reason of flight was not the true one. Whether that alleged reason embodied matter of fact or not is another question.

The rest of the day was spent in preparation for the intended departure. Even Kate became quite changed towards Leroy now, when she heard what he was about to do. Full of kind and thoughtful solicitude, she worked hard to get everything together he could possibly want, and felt quite sorry—with a sister's sorrow—to think of how he

was to leave them and go forth into the wide world alone.

She had most readily agreed that he should draw down her balance at the Bank to about £200,—which would give him another £2000,—and in all ways she sought to show him that he had in her an affectionate friend now that she believed herself not to be his wife.

And he, what did he think of this? A vision perhaps floated before him of life that might have been innocent and happy—a life she would have shared with him in perfect content, when the regard she was now showing might have been cherished into love, and the vain fancies for such as Henry might never have been dreamed of.

Oh, with all his cleverness, with all his power to obtain and keep money, what a fool, what a spendthrift he had been! Wise in the way of the world, he had been a fool in all that pertains to happiness; clever in amassing

wealth, he had been terribly wasteful of the chances and opportunities of life. A wild, desperate passion for a moment seized him. Why go through all this? Why bear it any longer?

“Kate,” said he suddenly, looking up from his packing operations at her as she stood ready to help him, “do you know I feel more than inclined to shoot you and Henry and myself, so as to end all this.”

“Frank, what do you mean?”

“Nothing, dear, nothing; I was mad for a moment. I believe I shall go thoroughly mad, some day. The sooner I get away the better.”

And the packing was resumed, but with less self-possession on Kate's part.

Henry, to whom she soon afterwards told what had occurred, said it was all nonsense, and straightway went and purchased a neat little revolver, which, with suitable cartridges,

he gave to his friend as a keep-sake, suggesting that it might be useful.

“Thank you, Jolliffe, very much for it ; but I must ask you to keep it until I am in the train going away. Then give it me : at present my mind is on fire, and I know not what I might do with it.”

“Very well ; but I’m sure you wouldn’t do any harm with it.”

“Perhaps not ; but I’d rather not be tempted.”

The trio sat up very late that night — the last night they were to be together — but they did not talk much. The position seemed to have reached a stage beyond mere words, and each one was perhaps more occupied in attempting to realize what was going to happen than in anything else.

They retired at last, but were up betimes in the morning ; and then came the drive to

the station, the train about to start, and the farewell.

Leroy took a hand of each in his, and placed them gently together. "God bless you both!" he whispered, with the semblance of a tear in his eye; then sprang into the train, which was already on the move, received the pistol from Henry, and was gone.

CHAPTER VI.

“ Into a limbo large and broad, since called
The Paradise of Fools, to few unknown.”—
‘ *Paradise Lost*,’ III. 495.

THE two who were thus left behind on the Scarbro platform walked slowly back to the hotel, scarcely able to appreciate what had happened, so quickly had it all come on, and so very strange was the situation of affairs. Little by little conversation began to flow, and it tended chiefly to eulogy of him who was now speeding away, not unmixed with a growing sense of joy almost beyond conception at the fate thus prepared for them.

Yes, they were indeed in the Paradise of Fools now, both as to what they thought

of him, and as to their feelings for one another. Under such a halo of romance a calm, dispassionate view of the matter was not possible. Their attachment, which had been fostered by so many extraneous influences before, was still destined to be fanned into a fiercer flame by the very strangeness of this part of the drama, and the exciting phases of experience through which they were now passing. Presently they may emerge into the searching light of the common-place world, and we shall see if they have love of a nature to stand the test.

Very wrong, the reader may think, this sojourn of theirs at the Royal Hotel. Doubtless it was at least a foolish thing; doubtless it was contrary to all recognized ideas. But still, they were young. They had been told to do it by Leroy; they thought it was a matter of vital necessity to him that they should do so; they were very innocent, whatever people

might think, and they considered themselves very much in love. Perhaps then the reader may be induced in some measure to forgive them, or at least not to look on them with utter scorn. What would any of us have done in a similar position? Some of us better, perhaps; many, undoubtedly, worse.

How sweet was that time thus spent! It was like the first awakening after troubled sleep, or the calm succeeding a stormy sea, before yet the heart has ceased to beat fast, and the mind to be swiftly moved with the anxieties so lately past.

Everything seemed delightful to them. The music had never been so sweet, the sea⁺ never so glorious, the old hack horses they at times would ride seemed endued with an unwonted elasticity of movement. The air was fresher, the sun more bright, and even the very boatmen on the sands appeared attractive; so that to embark with one and

capture the silvery whiting, or have a good invigorating sail through the dashing spray, became more than once a method of amusement and a thing of joy.

Then the evenings. Oh, those evenings! when the pleasures and the revels of the day were past, and alone they could sit and talk, and talk, and talk, until minded perhaps by the first streaks of coming day that it was not well to sit up quite all the night, and so would separate for rest.

But a little of this sort of thing—at least in a book—goes a long way, and it is not our intention to display it further, save to remark, that one afternoon, when they had but just come in, and Kate was writing a letter and Henry reading a book, the door opened and Miss Whytehead was announced, who, following close upon the announcement, stalked into the room. She knew Kate's family slightly, and as she happened to have come over to Scarbro

for a week or two, she had decided to call on Mr. and Mrs. Leroy, who were staying at the Royal, as she found from the list of visitors. She was ever on the look-out for new friends, inasmuch as she had of late years been perpetually losing her old ones, such an inveterate habit had she got of making mischief among them. This she would do by telling each one what the other had said about him or her, and that was bad enough, so long as she kept to it; but of late she had taken to inventing all kinds of malicious speeches about almost every one she knew, and declaring to the parties thus maligned that their dearest friends were the authors. This kind of thing was seen through before long, and, as may be conjectured, Miss Whytehead's society was not more eagerly sought after in consequence of it.

Here, however, she was; and terribly awkward was the position, for she knew Henry well enough by sight, and also slightly to

speak to. There were greetings, and then a feeling of constraint. What was to be said about Leroy? What about Henry?"

Miss Whytehead was as sharp as a hawk, and she saw at once there was something wrong. Here indeed appeared food for scandal and gossip if anywhere. She had seen Henry and Kate on the Spa the night before, and he was not there. What did it all mean? Still more stiffly the conversation went on, without so much as a mention of his name.

"You were on the Spa last night, I think?" said she to Kate.

"Yes, we were there; but I didn't see you, Miss Whytehead."

"I—we!"—so she called Henry and herself—"we—" Really, Miss Whytehead began to think it was not right for a virtuous person like herself to stay any longer in such company; still she would like to hear more, so she continued—

“Oh, yes, I was there, looking at the *aconite*; very clever, was it not, Mr. Jolliffe?”

“I beg your pardon, did you say *acolyte*?”

“Well, *acolyte*, or *aconite*, it’s all the same; I mean the man on the trapeze.”

“Oh, the *acrobat*!”

“Yes, that’s his name; wasn’t he clever?”

“Very.”

More stiff silence, common-place remarks, and departure at last of Miss Whytehead to blaze abroad the fact that Henry and Mrs. Leroy have eloped together, and are living at Scarbro. There was just this fortunate element in it, however, some people had seen Leroy there, and few, if any, were disposed to believe anything that Miss Whytehead said. She had cried “wolf” so often that now when she really had some sort of foundation for her story she found it difficult to obtain credence.

But it may be imagined what the feelings of our friends were after this unwelcome visitor

had departed. There were still two days of the week during which they had to stay, and the fear was that Captain and Mrs. Hamilton might receive information from some source as to what they were about. Not that it mattered much ; but it would bring about an earlier discovery of the flight.

“ Besides,” said Kate, “ she is an odious woman ; I know her by repute, and she will go saying all sorts of awful things about us.”

“ That we may be sure of. But I hope she won’t be believed.”

“ Horrid wretch ! did you see the kind of indignantly pious air she put on before she went ? ”

“ Yes ; I’m afraid we’re in for it, so far as she is concerned ; but after all, dear, what does it matter so long as we know we’re all right ? ”

The morning after this incident came a letter from Leroy to Henry, posted in Ireland.

He wrote gloomily enough—had got the money all right at Barnstaple, and was now on his way to California. This Henry must on no account reveal, for he had prepared the letters which were to be posted in York with a view to making every one else think he had gone to Spain. He exhorted Henry to be kind to Kate, and thus fulfil the last trust imposed on him by a broken-hearted man, who would have no other resting-place now than the grave; though faintly possible it was, that some day he might return, and the trio again be happy; that perhaps then Henry's children might learn to love him too. With blessings on both he ended a letter so pathetic that it was difficult to repress tears on reading it, almost impossible to doubt its genuine character.

“Poor Frank!” said Kate, “I am so sorry for him. I *do* hope we may see him again, don't you, Henry?”

“Yes, dear, I do indeed; and I don't see

why we shouldn't, for he'll have plenty of money, and should get on all right wherever he goes."

"Did you give him any money, Henry?"

"I lent him some."

"How much?"

"Five thousand pounds."

Kate said nothing; but with the instinct peculiar to women she began to suspect from this point that all was not right.

The day passed, and the next. It was now nearly time to depart, and Scarbro was looked on once again with regretful eyes, as though on saying good-bye to it the fairy land of light romance faded away, and the ordinary world re-appeared in its stead.

The first thing that recalled Henry to a sense of common things was the fact that he had to pay all the hotel bills, his good host having departed to foreign climes without mentioning that question. But what did that

matter? It was a very small thing after all ; so he did it without so much as an inward murmur. Then at last in the morning of their last day they drove off station-wards, not unmarked by chamber - maids and waiters, whom, however, handsome gratuities had indisposed to speak much ill. Cunning porters and obsequious guards beset them with offers of a carriage wherein they could be locked and no one else admitted, and several derived no small emolument in assisting to carry out this object. Tickets were taken for Chesterton, and the seclusion of the carriage having been successfully maintained, the engine whistled, the train moved, and they were off.

It was really quite amusing travelling thus together, and being taken for a newly-married couple ; and all progressed most favourably and blissfully in this fashion until York was reached. Here it was necessary to change, and here, as Henry said, they were almost sure

to meet some one they knew ; but, as good luck unaccountably had it, the station was very empty that day. There was not long to wait, and it seemed as if they were going to escape undetected. Just, however, as they were about to reach the carriage specially selected for them as before, there came a voice, "I beg your pardon, Mr. Jolliffe, but you said you would give me one of those fox-terrier puppies of old Vixen's."

Henry started round : there was the guard who did duty in the trains between Newton and York, and had done so for many years. A good genial old guard was this, and Henry had been glad to promise him a puppy ; but he wished him far enough just now. However, there was nothing for it.

"All right, Stevens," said he. "Go up to the Vicarage, and tell them to give you the white dog ; he'll make a good one for you, I expect."

“Much obliged to you, sir,” and the guard departed on his way to carry the news to those at Newton that he had seen Mr. Jolliffe going off south with a lady. Who the lady was they guessed readily enough, but remained in great uncertainty as to what had really happened.

What was even worse than this was, that the conversation with this man had diverted Henry’s attention from their destined carriage ; and now he found that people had been allowed to get into it, nor was there another empty one in the whole train.

Deeply objurgating the officials in his inmost conscience for permitting such a misfortune, he was none the less obliged to take up his position with his fair love in the company of two old ladies and one young gentleman ; so that a miserable journey might be anticipated, as in fact happened.

The old dames were going on to the very

end, so there was no hope ; and there was nothing left but to make the best of it, and be as happy as possible under the circumstances. The letters had been posted in York according to Leroy's request, and, for better for worse, were now on their way.

The plot was rapidly drawing to a head.

"You know, dear," said Henry in a low voice, "I shan't stay at Chesterton ; indeed, I shall go back by the very next train, so that people there won't be able to talk ; and then I shall make my way straight to town to see about this money business of his aunt's. The sooner that can be settled the better, so that we can get the rest cleared up."

"Oh, but won't you come and stay a little ? I shall be so miserable and frightened by myself."

"No, I'm sure it will be better not. We had an excuse for staying at Scarbro, which you must remember is, that he said he should

in all probability come back for you, and asked us meanwhile not to mention his absence. You won't forget that is what you must say?"

"No; I know perfectly well: he said he was called away at a moment's notice on urgent business, that in case he was not back you were to take me home, and, so that nothing could go wrong, he empowered you to act for him in everything connected with his aunt's money."

"Just so. I was to act in the improbable event of his not coming back."

"When do you think everything can be settled?"

"I really have no idea; for though I am by way of being a law student, I haven't the very faintest notion of any practice."

"I hope it will be soon."

And the train sped on, carrying these last dupes of Leroy to the south. Very unhappy were they as the hours passed by; but parting

must needs come at last, for Henry steadfastly refused to leave the Chesterton station, or indeed to show himself outside with her, where the carriage was waiting; so there was an agonizing adieu, trebly so because it was in public, and could be demonstrated only by words and looks.

“Darling,” said he, “next time we meet let us trust you will be free.”

“Yes, yes. How I shall pray for that time!”

* * * * *

Henry walks, sadly ruminating, up and down the platform. There is something very flat, melancholy, and miserable about being there in this wise all alone, having made one long journey, and being about to make another. There is a sort of feeling as of the next morning when one has caroused long and joyously over night; and at last the idea dawns that it may be well to feed, a matter

not yet attended to during the day. So this hero of romance proceeded to the refreshment-room, and there, after due deliberation, solaced himself with a beef-steak and a bottle of Pommery, after which he felt more able to battle with the world and all its troubles.

In no long time, however, the London train starts, and bears him away after this very flying visit to Chesterton, to arrive in the great metropolis during the dim dark hours of the morning. A bed at the station hotel, a short sleep, a refreshing bath, and then he sets forth in a much cooler frame of mind, armed with his documents, to interview Messrs. Boulter, Bird, and Co., who, as he is instructed by Leroy, have the management of the arrangements connected with the aunt's money.

Arrived at their offices in Chancery Lane, he waits some while among the clerks before he can be seen, and then at last is ushered into the presence of Mr. Boulter, a ponderous,

plethoric-looking gentleman, of no very great intelligence. To him Henry, as is the custom with eager clients, details rapidly how he has come to represent Leroy in the matter of his aunt, Miss Leroy, deceased ; how Leroy ought to have come, but didn't ; had given him this power of attorney, and also this charge, all of which Mr. Boulter, though looking very profound, failed to understand in the slightest degree. Indeed, he really didn't know what Henry was talking about.

"Yes, yes, I see," he muttered ; "but"—ringing the bell—"we had better have Mr. Bird here to talk this matter over. He has given more special attention to it than I have. John, will you ask Mr. Bird to be so kind as come in here ; a gentleman has called in the matter of—of—"

"Miss Leroy," explained Henry.

"Of course. How stupid of me to forget the name !"

Here Mr. Bird came in as requested. He was a very great contrast from his partner, being a thin, sandy-haired, and remarkably astute-looking gentleman; indeed, it was a fact, that all the important business of the firm devolved upon him, and he had only entered the partnership because he thereby acquired the advantages of a very large and old-established connection.

He soon grasped in a measure what Henry had to say.

“Really, this is most irregular on the part of Mr. Leroy. Have you no idea, sir, where he is?”

“Not the slightest.”

“It is most irregular,” chimed in Mr. Boulter, and relapsed into frowning silence.

“I question much whether this power of attorney is in order at all. We shall have to take counsel’s opinion about it. It is most annoying,” and Mr. Bird looked savagely at

Henry, as if he was to blame ; then continued, “ And that other document you have there, sir ; has it any bearing on this case ? ”

“ Not immediately, I should say ; but it will come in afterwards. It is a charge on the estate in my favour.”

“ Will you kindly allow me to look at it ? What’s this ? Frank Leroy—Henry Jolliffe. Whereas by her last will and testament—appointed the aforesaid Frank Leroy— ! Why, sir, where did you get this ? ”

“ From Mr. Leroy, of course ; whom else should I get it from ? ” answered Henry sharply, rather nettled at the other’s manner.

“ And you lent him £5000 upon this security ? ”

“ Yes ; it’s good enough, isn’t it ? ”

“ It isn’t worth the paper it’s written on. Nay, more, it is utterly false in what it says.”

“ How on earth can that be ? ”

“He told you his aunt had left him her money?”

“Yes, of course; it’s all set down there, isn’t it?”

“My dear sir, you have been most grossly deceived. She didn’t leave him a penny!”

“Good heavens! you don’t say so!”

Here was a blow for Henry; and he was at the first impulse about to tell all he knew, but on second thoughts refrained, for he knew not what might come of it; but his heart was sick within him, and he sat in silent dismay till he was aroused by the guttural chuckling of Mr. Boulter, who seemed to at length understand what had happened.

“A clever scamp!” said he. “Who’d have thought it? But he’ll have got more than that, Bird; he’ll have got more than that.”

“I think you are very probably right. Mr. Jolliffe, with that power of attorney you can

at least ask to examine the trustee's pass-book at the London and County Bank. Would you be good enough to drive over and bring it here ?”

Henry went as he was asked, and obtained the pass-book easily enough. The account had lately been simply in Leroy's name, so that the Bank had no knowledge whatever of its being other than a private matter of his. This plan had been adopted to distinguish money that was waiting for investment, or was on deposit, from the mere interest, which of course had been regularly paid to the old lady's own account. It was a very unnecessary proceeding, no doubt, and it looked very much as though Leroy had long been contemplating a confiscation ; but, nevertheless, it was so ; and an examination of the book disclosed that Mr. Leroy had drawn out £5000 the day after the funeral.

Mr. Boulter rubbed his fat hands with glee.

“I told you so ; I told you so !” said he, hoarse with merriment ; “ but there’ll be more yet, Bird ; there’ll be more yet.”

“I sincerely hope not. Pray heaven the rest of the principal is untouched. Mr. Jolliffe, you will, I am sure, pardon my troubling you again. The matter is most serious ; will you go to the Bank and ask for a memorandum of the securities at present lying there on this account ? ”

Henry went, and returned. The foreign bonds, it was found, had been withdrawn from the Bank ; indeed, as we know, Leroy had kept them in a safe at his office some while before he was tempted to sell them.

“He may have deposited them elsewhere,” suggested Bird, thoughtfully.

“Not he, not he,” cried Boulter, now bursting into laughter. “Upon my word, it’s the cleverest thing I’ve come across for many a long day.”

"Really, Boulter, this mirth is somewhat ill-timed."

"Yes, yes; I beg your pardon, Mr. Jolliffe," and Mr. Boulter once more lapsed into his expression of dignified obesity.

"I begin to see it all plainly now," continued Mr. Bird: "he has appropriated those bonds in his aunt's lifetime, thinking, probably, she would make a will in his favour, and no one would ever be the wiser. Now when he found she left all away from him, he has just bolted with all he could secure."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Mr. Boulter, bursting forth again, but instantly recovering himself beneath his partner's angry glance.

"Well, gentlemen," said Henry, "I need hardly say under the circumstances how sorry I am for all this; he has misled me probably more than any one. However, I will go and see if I can find any other documents that may be of use. I will also write to Mrs. Leroy,

who will, I am sure, help us as much as she can."

"And he left his wife with you at Scarbro?" said Mr. Boulter, whose dignity was undergoing a complete collapse before what he deemed the humour of the performance.

"He did, sir," said Henry severely.

"And you had to pay the hotel bill?"

"Really, sir, I must decline to enter into any discussion with you on such matters. Mr. Bird, I will write to appoint a meeting with *you* when I have anything to communicate. Good morning, gentlemen."

And Henry departed in a state of mingled anger with the portly Boulter, and dismay and apprehension so far as his own interests were concerned.

At once he telegraphed to Kate to send up the sealed packet of documents purporting to contain the evidence of Leroy's previous marriage, and he wrote her a long letter explaining

all that had occurred, and preparing her for the worst ; “ For,” said he, “ the more I think of it now the more improbable does this story of the previous marriage seem. When he told me it I knew of no other motive for his running away from the country, except his so-called desire to serve us. Now, a most obvious motive is supplied in the fact that he has taken all this money of his aunt’s, and could not escape detection. I am very much afraid, therefore, he has only used us as his dupes to enable him to get safely away.”

By the next post the documents arrived, and also a despairing letter from Kate. But almost without reading that Henry hurried off to Messrs. Boulter and Bird’s in a fever of anxiety to have the parcel opened and the contents disclosed.

There is no need to make a long story of it. There was nothing inside but a few memoranda

of agreements for the letting of villa residences in a suburban district.

“There’s nothing here that will help us, sir,” said Mr. Bird, little knowing the reason that particular packet had been so eagerly brought to him ; and Henry went away sick at heart, realizing at last what an utter fool he had made of himself, or rather, had been made.

“Why, I might have been suspicious at the parcel’s being sealed,” thought he ; “but then I never dreamed of him not being straight. He must have had a low opinion of my cleverness to be confident he could take me in so easily. I should have thought he would have made out marriage-certificates and all kinds of things ; and instead of that, he does me with these beastly old agreement-papers ! I never had sense to ask for anything definite ; didn’t even demand the address of his supposed wife. Nay, when I think of it, I didn’t even

look to see whether one of those letters purported to be addressed to her, not that that would have been of much importance as things have turned out, for it would just have been a sham, and it would have been returned 'not known,' no doubt, supposing he put any address inside."

It was no use repining, though the position was most maddening; for it was impossible to give any directions which might lead to Leroy's capture, because that would have involved an admission of what was really done at Scarbro, and no satisfactory explanation of that could be given, more especially as the story had now been told as Leroy desired that it should be. There was nothing for it but to bear the disappointment, and to think, after all, Kate was happier and better off by herself than with such a husband; besides, there was this point also, which, in the excitement of what had

passed, he had never yet thought of. If Kate were not married all the property settled on her would have turned out not to be settled at all, and could have been taken from her; but then it would be impossible to ascertain now whether Leroy was alive or dead, and so in any case when could she marry again?

The letters posted at York had informed various friends of his flight, and made excuses for his conduct. Moreover, the story got into the papers with all sorts of exaggerations, and became a general topic of conversation.

Kate went to stay with her parents as soon as it all came out; and they, wisely thinking it the best way to silence scandal, at once asked Henry down also to discuss what had happened, and advise on the future.

CHAPTER VII.

“ Then he cried and said,
‘ Lo, how the gods are mocking me with this,
And show me pictures of my vanished bliss,
As though on earth I were, and not in hell ;
And images of things I know full well
Have set about me. Can I die again,
And in some lower hell forget the pain
My life is passed in now ? ’ ”

‘ *The Life and Death of Jason,*’ xvii. 1132.

LEROY had started from Liverpool, and we have heard of him as far as Ireland. Thence fairly away upon the ocean, the good ship ‘ Dublin Castle ’ was conveying him and his fortunes to a new country. There it was he expected to find fresh fields for his talent. A man of his experience possessed of a moderate amount of capital was bound to rise.

Such had been his thoughts while he planned

his escape, and so long as his firm will remained, and his steadfast purpose to stand, no matter who else fell, the prospect seemed one that was at least far from desperate.

He had shaved off his whiskers and heavy moustache for fear of recognition by some one on board, and he assumed the name of Johnson. He was going out, he said, with what capital he had been able to realize, to try his luck in the colonies, for he was convinced that the old country was played out.

There was nothing whatever unusual about such a statement. Then, now, and in long past years, the same cry has gone up. When the National Debt was but a tithe of what it is, the country could not possibly support it, at least so thought and said very many wiseacres; yet still the old country lives and prospers, whether yet at its zenith or not who can tell? Certainly not showing signs of

decay ; at any rate, that is our very humble opinion.

It may have been concluded by this that Leroy was a man over whose actions affection and friendship had no power. He cast them aside whenever they stood in his way, and so he had risen. It may well be that, so far as success in business is concerned, he was in the abstract right ; for, according to our experience, selfishness, coupled with a rigid observance of method, brings riches to men ; while those who try to serve others generally fail to help themselves.

But we hold, that a man who is capable of sacrificing friendship and affection to what he deems his own business interests is one whose moral character will bear no severe strain. It may be he will never be put to the test in this point, and will rise to affluence, eminence, and the respect of all men ; but once let him be sorely tried, and he will fail, as we have

seen Leroy did when he appropriated his aunt's bonds. Sooner or later honesty is the happiest, and therefore the best policy; and in his case he could not but think now with bitter regret how, in his eager anxiety to preserve his ill-gotten gains, he had rushed into that marriage in a panic of fear that all he had received might be recovered from him, whereas subsequent experience and reflection had shown he could easily have arranged every claim against him with about half of the fortune he had settled. Settled?—That was a bitter thought, for was not that the very thing which hampered him, and so tempted him to take those bonds?

His desire to keep his money must have made him mad, for otherwise he would have known that it was impossible to do so and at the same time preserve his own credit—at least not without committing that crime. He had been on the horns of a most manifest

dilemma—either he must pay his creditors, and so lose his money; or he must save his money, and himself go through the Bankruptcy Court. But he had been mad enough to cling to the money without carefully looking to the consequences of his doing so; and when they were forced upon him, at a time when his credit was become doubly dear to him, then he shrank from those consequences, and avoided them by the sin which had now found him out.

It may be said, he should have applied to his wife's trustees to release him from his difficulties, and that would no doubt have been the best course; but he was a man of a singularly proud and reserved disposition in all that pertained to his financial state. He knew that by the trustees he was regarded as the personification of stability, and he could not bring himself to come before them in the guise of a suppliant.

The position was gradually led up to, for with him, as with others, the saying was true enough, "*Nemo repente fuit turpissimus*;" but when the push came he turned from the straight and narrow path; his aunt's bonds were ready to his hand: he took them, used them, and thus meeting demands, without even an attempt to borrow money, he maintained his credit among all men, for a while universally approved, save perhaps by his own conscience.

Once fairly away his strength began to give way. The old energy that had supported him through his doings of the past week was failing him, and in its stead the fitful gusts of passion, intermixed with gloom and despondency, were reasserting their sway.

He was a bad sailor, a very bad one indeed, and though the introduction of this fact may excite a smile, it is none the less directly connected with what followed. There is very

little commiseration for people who are seasick ; why we never could exactly make out, but so it is. Those who are not ill regard those who are from a stand-point of proved superiority, and are inclined to ridicule rather than to pity ; nevertheless, that the illness is one of a most terribly depressing character is certain.

Bodily depression means mental depression, and here we get the keynote of Leroy's action. Yet, even as we write it, we cannot but be conscious that many will think such a cause a most inartistic introduction to such an effect as we are about to narrate ; and this might be so were it a case of pure fiction ; but we are bound somewhat by facts, and must therefore give them.

It might be that a congested liver would form but an uninteresting motive for murder ; but if we were writing of such a case—and such cases have undoubtedly been—we should

not strive to embellish the liver, but just state it plainly and simply.

With him, however, there were other concomitant causes at work, the chief of which was "drink." He had, as we know, been giving way to it for some time, and as soon as ever he was safe on board ship he commenced, either to seek oblivion of the past by its means, or to create a genial, happy frame of mind with regard to the future.

Weakened as he was by his trials, this told on him with double effect, and then, as the winds arose, and the ship rolled and tossed more and more, his condition became wretched to the last degree.

Misfortune, misery, and illness bring down the most stubborn hearts, and will even extract prayers from lips that never uttered them before, and will never utter them again if comfort returns and abides with them. And there are many who have not very evil

consciences who have, nevertheless, when tossed about upon the seas, been reduced to a state in which they would almost wish to die, or certainly be quite indifferent about it.

To one, however, who was leaving name and fame, wealth and prosperity, behind, going forth friendless and alone, in danger of pursuit and capture, with the knowledge that he had deceived every one, even those whom he had affected to be serving ; with his mind shifting and veering in a whirl of emotions, that were now swaying it beyond the control of his will,—once so strong, now so weak,—bodily exhaustion was indeed a perilous state.

It was night, and he in his cabin sat pale and ghastly. The roar and crash of the waves as they struck the ship, the footsteps and indistinct voices overhead, and the melancholy creaking and groaning of the timbers, seemed

to agitate him ; but he spoke no word : he was thinking.

What were his thoughts ? That will never be known ; but presently he burst forth, with a wild light in his eye, “ Oh, that I could believe there was a God who hears prayers, that I might pray him to undo the past ! My mother told me there was a God. I have read the Bible with her. Would that I could remember that Bible now ! What did it say ? I remember one thing,—‘ Cut it down ; why cumbereth it the ground ? ’ Strange ! why should I remember and think of that ? What does it mean ? ‘ Cut it down ; why cumbereth it the ground ? ’ I seem to see the words written up in letters of fire over there. Oh, Kate, Kate ! how I have wronged you and him you love ! How you two will hate me now that you have found out all ! What a ruin I have made of your happiness and of my own ! From what a height how low have I

fallen ! Oh, it is madness to think of the future : never, never again can I be what I was. I have been a wretch, a scoundrel, and now what am I ? of what use am I ? Ah ! those words of fire still there ; they seem burning into my brain.”

The wind howled and moaned over the great waters, and the other sounds of storm had increased.

His eye fell on the case wherein was the revolver that Henry had given him. “ The words mean me,” he muttered, with a sudden flash of inspiration. “ It is I who cumber the ground.”

Then after a pause he took the pistol from the case. It was already loaded.

“ He told me it might prove useful : his words were true. Yes, yes, it will be better so. Did I speak just now of a God ? Well, it is too late for me to think whether there is one or not ; at least, He cannot be for such as me.

But if there be devils, as I think there are, if those be demons that are careering with the angry blast over the sea, then let my spirit—if I have a spirit—join them. They will find a fitting mate. And yet I will do one good act before the end.”

He rose with difficulty to his feet,—for he was very weak now,—and staggered across to where he kept some note-paper. Returning to his seat, he proceeded to write wearily enough in pencil. It was but a few lines, addressed to the captain of the ship, as follows :—

“SIR,

“What I am about to do you will know before you read this. Why I have done it you will probably understand before long. I write this, however, to inform you that I am Frank Leroy, of Brancksey Park, Chesterton, England. Send my money and effects to my wife at that address. I had purposely destroyed all trace

of my identity, but having changed my mind, have thought fit to disclose it to you.

“ I remain,

“ Yours obediently,

“ F. LEROY.”

Then a few more lines, which he addressed to H. Jolliffe, Esq., Newton Vicarage, Yorkshire.

“ DEAR HENRY,

“ Your revolver has ‘ proved useful.’

I have freed Kate by its means, and rid the world of a sinner. I think I have never done a good act before. Give me credit for this accordingly, or rather, give credit to what you remember of me, for within two minutes from the time I write this I shall be *dead*. Good-bye. May you both be happy !

“ Yours till death,

“ F. LEROY.”

He took the revolver. "Head or heart?" he muttered musingly to himself. "I think it might be difficult to hit *my* heart;" and he actually smiled over the grim conceit. "Head be it then."

* * * * *

He was found next morning perfectly dead, and the letters by his side. He had done well to write them, for otherwise no one would ever have known but that he was Mr. Johnson, as he at first said; and Kate, hearing nothing of his fate, would have been held in bondage for at least seven years before she would have been entitled to presume him dead.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Forlorn ! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self !
Adieu ! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is feigned to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu ! adieu ! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill side ; and now ’tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades :
Was it a vision or a waking dream ?
Fled is the music. Do I wake or sleep ? ”—*Keats*.

AND now ought not Henry and Kate to get married, and live happily ever afterwards ? That were a consummation devoutly to be wished, at least, some may think so ; but at the risk of offending those who may have been led to believe it would happen by what has gone before, we are bound to state what really occurred, and to resist the inclination to

render the story as the imagination would have it—

“ And he that told the tale in older times
Says that Sir Gareth wedded Lyonors,
But he that told it later says Lynette.”

And we are in the present instance like the truthful tale-teller of older times, not like the later one, who said it was Lynette just because he thought it ought to have been.

Henry did not stay long with the Hamiltons, to whom he only went for the sake of appearances. The flight of Leroy had been a nine days' wonder ; but people soon ceased to talk about it, and his death was not yet known.

Under the circumstances the afflicted Kate, of whom many and various opinions were formed, had decided to take up her abode with her parents, and to let Brancksey. What was there left for her but to live a miserable life and think of Henry ? It was possible to see much of him before, when her husband was

there to apparently sanction it; but now there could be no excuse for having him with her, it could not be.

Meanwhile Henry went back to Oxford and commenced reading by way of diversion; this, too, with such good purpose that he actually secured a First in the History Schools at the end of the term—a matter somewhat remarkable when everything is considered.

The news of Leroy's end presently arrived. Henry received his letter in due course, which shocked him no little, as may be imagined, and the fact of the death was proved beyond all possible doubt. The greater part of the money too that the unfortunate man had taken with him was restored; but of course that went to the general body of his creditors.

The bar thus removed, what remained but to marry Kate and share her large fortune? Nothing. Yes, he was compelled to admit

nothing remained; and yet he did not feel altogether overjoyed about it.

Certainly he and she wrote tender epistles—the words much the same as heretofore, but it hardly seemed with such a true ring about them. She indeed looked on the thing now as a foregone conclusion, to be viewed after a more matter-of-fact fashion; while he—well, he hardly knew what to think about it.

But he journeyed up to town that Christmas to see the Pantomimes, and the Hamiltons were also at Eaton Square for a similar purpose; yet on the first available day he went not to see Kate, but to see—Blair Athol at the Cobham stud. It is sad now to think of Cobham, and yet not so sad as it might have been had the establishment been quite broken up in these later days when we write. How familiar to us once were the drives from Esher station to the stud farm; how happy were the days spent there! What amusing converse have we

heard ! what samples of the most illustrious blood have we seen ! It is past and gone—for us ; but, nevertheless, the days spent there will shine brightly out through the remainder of our existence.

To Henry the whole scene at Cobham was indeed delightful, and even the hearty welcome of the manager seemed to bring back common sense and enjoyment of life to his mind. What man ever seemed more genial and pleased to see a kindred soul than that same manager ?

It was a busy day, and Henry, being left for a while to his own devices, strolled on to where he knew Blair Athol was, though he had not been to see him as yet that morning. Entering the yard wherein the great horse's box stood, he passed on to the door, the upper half of which was open, and—there he was !

No need to express raptures here, no need to illustrate admiration. There was Blair Athol, and there was Henry gazing at him,

that is all we need say. We may watch them though, and note the long, long look which is bent upon the horse ; and we may attempt to fathom what is passing in that wayward, impressionable mind. This is something like it :—

“ After all, there is something more truly noble there to think about. He is grand, magnificent, as he stands with that splendid shoulder, that short back, that beautiful blood-like reach of neck, on which the head, with its amiable blaze face, is set so elegantly. What ground he stands over ! what raking liberty ! and see the length from the hip to the round bone, and to the hock ! I love the horse, even to the strange bump on his quarters I love him. Yes, old man, I know your ankles are a bit queer ; but you could travel on them, couldn't you ? Aye, and your stock can do the like, not quite the like as yet, perhaps, but the time will come.”

Then we see another long, long gaze over the door, while old Blair steadily munches his food, or looks round complacently from time to time at his visitor.

“I tell you what it is, Blair,” says Henry at length : “ my love for you is wonderful, passing the love of women ! ”

Then more pondering, and fancy goes back to the time when that same horse, then a fresh young three-year-old, skimmed so lightly over Langton Wold ; and when he bore with him the hearts and the money of united Yorkshire into the fray at Epsom, emerging a glorious victor from the contest, and destined to be famous for all succeeding ages. Then all the after years in which his stock had run.

“ Why,” thought Henry, “ why have I not been true to the cause ? Why have I not gone in for them, and stuck to them heart and soul, instead of playing the fool as I have done ? I felt it when Glentilt won at York last August :

it made me so that I couldn't bear the thought of Kate ; and why ? Because there is something truer and better about this—I know it—than there is about the other game."

His dream that he dreamed at Saltoun long years ago now flashed across him—when he rode Blair Athol away from Kate and seeming comfort to an obscure and barren wilderness of what he deemed duty. Could there be anything in this ? Could this natural repugnance which the element of his soul that gloried in Blair Athol had for his association with Kate be what his dream foretold ?

"Now then," cried the merry voice of the manager behind him ; "how much longer are ye going to stare at him ?"

Henry starts back from his reverie, and the manager bursts into a hearty laugh.

"He's worth looking at, too. I don't blame you ; but if it had been some young woman you couldn't have been more taken up."

“He’s better worth looking at than any young woman I ever saw,” laughed Henry.

“Hoots, man ! but what’s that I heard of you at Scarbro ?” and the worthy soul laughed at the bare idea of his question till the tears ran down his cheeks ; while Henry, who found himself detected even in this quarter, could not help joining in the merriment.

He and the manager were not to be parted that day, for they succeeded in talking until it was dinner-time, and so Henry had to stay ; and then they talked over some excellent claret until the last train time had passed, and so there was nothing for it but a night there, which, coupled with the spirit of Blair Athol pervading the place, went an immense way towards placing Henry’s mind on a strong, manly, honest basis, as different as possible from the miserable, weak, flickering pedestal it had occupied during his recent adventures.

He felt as though he was stretching and

expanding himself from bonds with which he had wilfully bound himself, but which he could snap like pack-thread when he really felt called upon to try. The phantasms, the enshrouding miasma of moral weakness with which he had been beset, were clearing off as clouds driven by a rapid gale. All that he had done began to appear to him as strange and unattractive. Blair Athol and Blair Athol's manager had made a man of him again—a man with a strong heart, a discerning eye, and a calm will.

All this may seem hardly capable of belief to the reader, who may rather see in Henry a fickle soul, and may declaim against him for this change, rather than approve it. We ourselves will not go so far as to say that other elements were not at work. We do not believe, in the first place, that Henry ever loved Kate, and we have striven throughout to make this sufficiently manifest. We think that what he deemed love was the outcome of the spirit of

opposition, aided by the spirit of conceit. As the American trotter goes at best speed so long as you pull at him, as the pig goes one way so long as you drive him the other,—but both stop when you cease your efforts against them,—so, too, in this case the removal of the barrier which the existence of Leroy had established removed also what was the chief attraction that lay between Henry and Kate. Parted by necessity, they complained, and believed they loved. The cause of parting being removed, their love was like to be removed also.

Not that we mean in Kate's case she would ever have absolutely renounced Henry of her own accord. No; she had made up her mind to marry him, and was prepared to do so, though the romance was all over, and she could with difficulty now write him letters as of old; but he was all this while falling more and more away, to be recalled to his allegiance less and less each time he saw her.

There was undoubted wealth with her, which to him would have been very acceptable by this time, as he had run financial matters into some disorder ; but there was also the feeling that with her he lapsed into a state that reduced him far below the level for which he was fitted by intellect and by his natural wishes. He now felt as a true man that he had been wrong, very wrong, in acting with her as he had done. Thank God, he could acquit himself of all blame in the matter of her husband's death. Yet it might have been otherwise.

She was a pretty woman, and a good-hearted woman, and would make some man a good wife ; but not a man such as Henry. He himself was too easily led, too easily swayed by those with him, to be ever happy or successful with her. She was weak and childish, and weak and childish she would have made him : then all the powers he possessed would have

been buried and lain dormant, while he, conscious of their existence, would have been miserable because he had not the strength to use them. What power of intellect he possessed he proved, as we have said, by taking his "first" at Oxford in spite of all drawbacks; and that opportune journey to Cobham had laid bare and open to him the whole necessities of his life. With the strong he could be strong, but with the weak he also was weak. Something pure, something powerful, something heroic, though embodied only in a horse, this was what was required to elevate him, to drive him onward in life; something, by the contemplation of which his spirit could be raised from its lethargy and voluptuous ease.

Hero-worship is in itself the sign of a man who can arouse his mind to think, to ponder, and to *admire*. He who is incapable of hero-worship is incapable of serious thought; for no one who really *thinks* can fail to find something

that is wonderful, past his ken, and therefore *admirable*. The order of the universe, the pre-eminent genius of a man—these are indeed subjects for admiration, inasmuch as we can never understand them ; no matter how scientific we grow, we can never say in plain terms what and how they *are*. The man who passes them by as mere common-place matters is one who, by nature or by education, is a non-thinker. The rude savage, who sees in the order of the universe a deity, who deifies a hero man, is more wise, more worthy of commendation, and more likely to meet with his reward.

This wonderment, this admiration, extending even to the qualities of a horse, had taken hold of Henry, and thus roused him to thought. The reader may perhaps never understand this: we cannot help it, but will only say to such as scoff, Look at Blair Athol if you are fond of a horse, and more especially if you are Yorkshire born ; look at him, and try to tell us what it is

that made him win the Derby and Leger ; what it is that proclaims him at first sight a king among horses ; and what it is that excites a feeling almost of adoration in many minds. Is it not the very inexplicable quality or essence that has ere now deified many a hero, just because it is inexplicable ; and shall we say that we are the worse in these cut-and-dried ages for a glimpse of a genuine hero-worship, even though the hero be a horse ?

Thought produces what is termed common sense, and common sense Henry was speedily acquiring. His associations with Kate were becoming colder and still more cold. She was indifferent to this herself, though still willing to marry him ; indeed, for her the charm was all past.

One of the first persons Henry met on his return to town was Lord Chesterton, who welcomed him most cordially, and asked him to dinner in a quiet way.

“ You will find us quite in the rough,” said his lordship. “ We are so seldom in town at this time of the year. You won’t mind having such short notice I am sure. Ah ! by the way, you knew Leroy—awful scoundrel, wasn’t he ? We shall be having another election at Chesterton directly. Well, good-bye ; see you to-night.”

Henry heard in the course of the day at the club that Lord Chesterton was in great difficulties. He had gone the pace in his youth, and had never managed to shake off the clutches of the Jews. The estate was a magnificent one, but charged almost beyond endurance ; and, as a matter of fact, the family were living quietly in town to economize.

This notwithstanding, the dinner, at which there were eight or ten more or less eminent guests, was all that could possibly be desired ; and Henry was greatly pleased to meet Lady Geraldine again, for of course she was there,

and looking much prettier somehow than he ever fancied her to be. He did not have much chance of speaking to her until after dinner, but all the while he kept thinking of the truth, honesty, and strength of her character. Partly by experience, but chiefly by instinct, he knew these qualities to be hers ; and completely neglecting a faded though famous literary lady who had been assigned to his charge, failing to join with tolerable coherence in any conversation, and seeming to be utterly stupid, he ruminated and pondered on this one subject. Truly the scales seemed to have fallen from his eyes ; for how frightfully blind he must have been not to see the worth of Lady Geraldine as he saw it now, and that, too, when she had scarcely spoken a word to him more than ordinary greeting.

Before dinner was over, he had said to himself, “ Here, by God’s rood, is the one maid for me.” But then came despondency as he

remembered the past ; for how would she ever by any possibility care about him whom she had herself detected in the act of making himself a fool ?

Afterwards in the drawing-room he managed to get near her while some elaborate music was going on. It was a large room, and they were some little distance from the others. Very awkward did he feel after he had located himself on a chair in tolerable proximity to her, and she, looking up from the pages of an uninteresting album, surveyed him with an almost maternal air of superiority. He tried to say something about the Pantomimes, but failed ; he could not speak to her on trivial subjects, and she, though she seemed half amused, gave him no assistance. At last he managed to clumsily announce that he was going in for the Bar examination on the first of January. Instantly her face lighted up.

“I’m very glad to hear that,” she said ;

“for I know you will do well if you will but try.”

“Oh, I’m sure to pass all right.”

“I don’t mean that. Of course you’ll *pass*; but that’s nothing. I thought from the fact of your going in for the Examination you had decided to work afterwards. That was what I meant when I said you’d do well; but I suppose you’ll grow idle again.”

“No, no,” said Henry warmly; “I do assure you I won’t. It may seem ridiculous to you, but the sight of old Blair Athol yesterday gave me fresh life; and I—I felt I’d been making rather a fool of myself, don’t you know, and so—”

He stopped, confused, as he remembered what she had seen of him and Kate; but she, with something of tenderness in her look, asked,

“And are you so weak that it depends on a horse whether you do right or

wrong?" and she laughed a little, but not unkindly.

"I don't know, I can hardly understand myself; I suppose I am weak, and an idiot. But then if a horse can bring me to myself, doesn't it show I am not so very far astray—not an inveterate fool? I could manage without the horse if I had any one like you to drive sense into me."

Then his heart failed him a bit at having said so much, and an unwonted blush showed signs of asserting itself on his face.

"Nonsense; you must learn to depend on yourself for good motives. Now don't think I'm preaching to you; but tell me what *are* you really going to do?"

"I'm going to work at my profession."

"You really mean that?"

"I really do."

"I don't know why it should make me so glad to hear you say so, but glad I am. One

thing more though I should like to know—are you to console Mrs. Leroy for her husband's death ? ”

There was a little confusion on her part as she brought out this question ; but Henry answered very firmly, looking straight into her eyes—

“ To be rid of him at all is in one sense sufficient consolation for her. You know, Lady Geraldine, how things once stood. That is over ; that spell is broken for ever. I dreamed years ago that Blair Athol took me from her and what seemed pleasure, to face what seemed hard work, or something of the kind. It was a queer dream, but it has come true.”

“ But—but does she know this ? ”

“ She cares no more for me than I for her, and that is not at all. She has lots of money, and will be happy in her way ; and I, though I shall never shake off the regret for having been such a fool and worse than a fool, will do

my best to go straight now ; but I'm not a very good hand at guiding myself. If I only had your sense, or—" and then Henry pulled up, fearing he was going ahead too fast.

"Or what ?" asked she.

"You, dear Geraldine," interposed her father, coming up at the moment, "had better play Sir William's accompaniment for him."

Geraldine started and flushed at the first words, then got up to assist Sir William Cratchley in his murderous execution of a song.

* * * * *

A few lines more now and we have done. Experience of life has taught us that facts do not fall out so symmetrically as fiction-weavers love to make them ; so if aught here disappoints the expectations of the idealist, we have only to plead that the "actual" is commonly disappointing. Any one might have imagined that Tom would have married Mary Jolliffe ;

and this he did, after Miss Whytehead had signalized herself by forbidding the banns. So far so good. But what will be said of Kate when it is read that in no long time she bestowed herself and her fortune on her old *fiancé*, Prince Lambertini, who thereupon ceased speculation, and lived with her prosperously and happily.

“ And in their halls arose
The cry of children, Enids and Geraints
Of times to be.”

And as for Henry,—well, we have had enough of him. He shall be dealt with in two lines from the good old Scottish song—

“ Next time that the Laird and Lady were seen,
They were go’n’ arm in arm to the kirk on the green.”

Among presents on that occasion to the “ lady,” the least valuable, but most valued, was a horse-hair bracelet, the contribution of Blair Athol.

Gungah:

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